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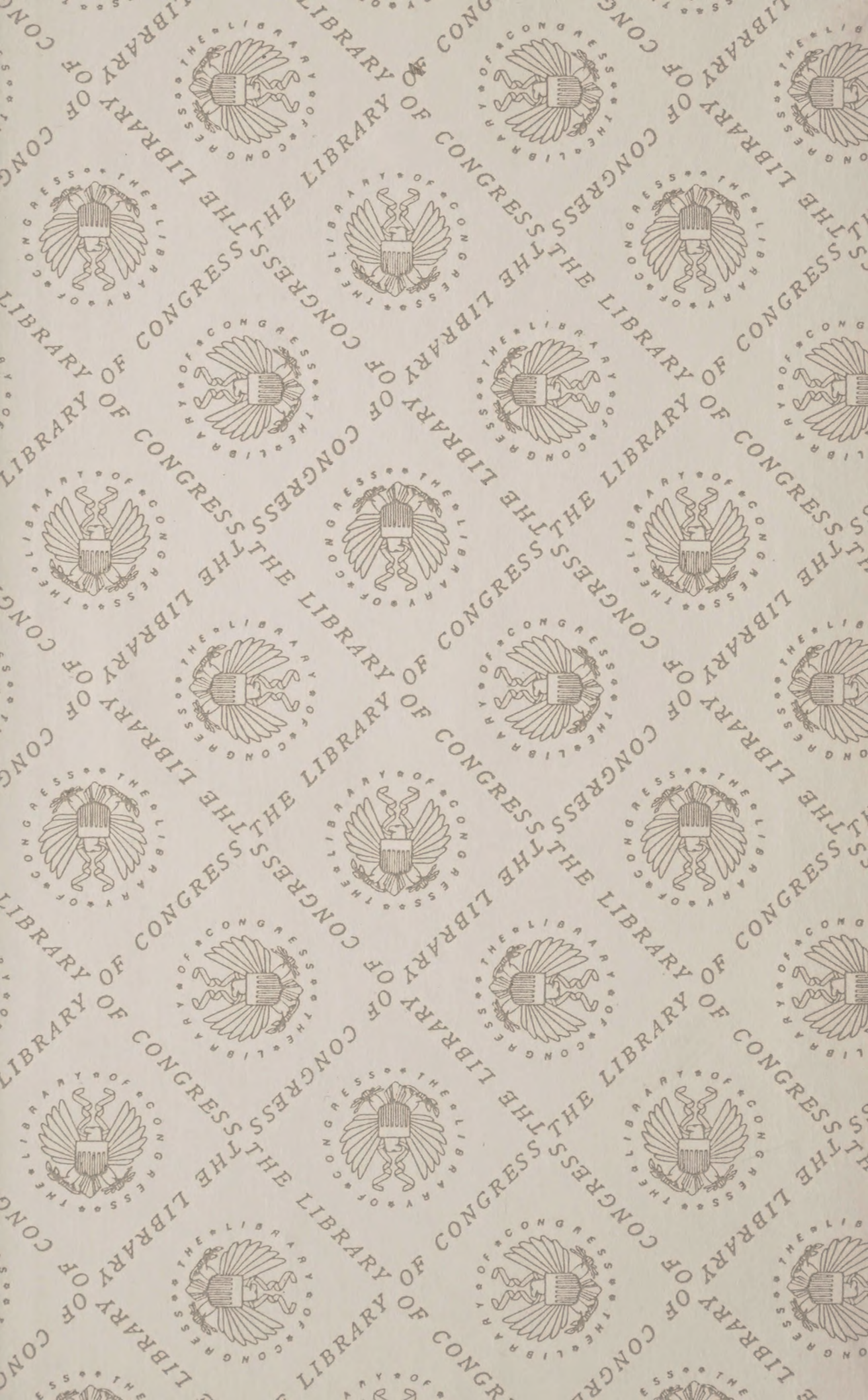
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WHEN MARGARET WAS A SOPHOMORE

"I FIRMLY BELIEVE YOU WERE A MERMAID, MELLA, DEAR."

WHEN MARGARET WAS A SOPHOMORE

BY

ELIZABETH HOLLISTER HUNT

AUTHOR OF "WHEN MARGARET WAS A FRESHMAN"

ILLUSTRATED

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WHEN MARGARET WAS A SOPHOMORE

CHAPTER I

THE BATTLE OF THE BUNTINGS

"Oh, Ethel, these stairs! I know their squeaks will wake up every freshman in the place!" Margaret Winters whispered excitedly to Ethel Hall as they tiptoed down the back stairs of Ware Hall, their arms full of bundles. "Let's hurry and get the dining-room doors shut before the others get down. That's one step toward victory."

It was eleven-thirty on the night of November twenty-first, in Margaret Winters' sophomore year at Ainsley,— the night before the big freshman-sophomore game. To be the first to get their colors up in the dining-rooms of the residence halls on this particular night, and to prevent the freshmen from flying their banner in the gymnasium before the game on the twenty-second, were feats worthy of the sophomores' keenest efforts.

As freshmen they had been defeated in all their struggles against the sophomores, with the single exception of their class election, which, as those who followed Margaret and her friends through her first year, will remember, was carried to complete success by Margaret's and Ethel's ready wit. This year as sophomores they must not be outwitted by the freshmen.

"Oh, girls, girls, I feel thrilled to the bone! It's almost as ravishing as our freshman journey with 'Gabe' and the sophs," Mildred Arthur exclaimed as the girls rather anxiously opened the dining-room doors and stepped inside, fearing lest the freshmen might be ahead of them. Before they could recover their balance, Mildred had danced them half across the floor, endangering their secret at every step forward in the dark.

"Mildred, for pity's sake, stop! We shall have the freshmen upon us before we can get our colors over the chandeliers," Margaret implored, freeing herself from Mildred's grasp.

"Ye-es um! When Baby Stuart speaks, Mildred bends to listen!" provokingly. The girls giggled. It was a vivid reminder of those freshman days when Mildred had led the fight against Margaret and her candidate for class president.

Ethel, meanwhile, with the help of several of

her classmates, had begun to unroll the yellow bunting preparatory to attaching the strands to the chandeliers — there were five of them, one in the middle and two at each end. The bunting, once caught to these, must be fastened over the fireplaces at each end of the room. This done, the room was theirs to do with as they chose. Their work must be rapid. The freshmen were a lively crowd, and twelve strong in Ware, against the ten sophomores.

Ignoring Mildred's fling, Margaret picked up the stepladder, caught Mildred by the arm and started resolutely for the center chandelier. Mounting instantly, she called to the girls,

"Quick! Ethel, Mildred, give me the four ends; I'll fasten them here." As she knotted them, one of the girls at the door opened it cautiously and looked out.

"Girls, the freshmen are loose in the upper hall collecting their forces; be quick!" Margaret had finished tying the ends.

"Here, Ethel, tack those two ends over that fireplace, while Mildred and I take the other!" Margaret commanded in low tones. "No frills — those can come after!" starting down the ladder as she spoke.

Mildred and several of the girls picked up the

ladder and started at an unsettling pace toward the fireplace. Margaret clung on for dear life, and the goal would have been reached in triumph, had not Mildred taken a notion to whirl-about-face. With a clatter that would have raised the Seven Sleepers, to say nothing of very alert and wary freshmen, the ladder and Margaret descended.

"Oh, Mildred, it's just like you!" from Ethel, who was desperately tacking her two strands on the farther side of the room, and "Sh-h-hs!" came from the excited classmates, and giggles from the tangle of girls.

> "Jack went up and down the ladder,
> Jill came meekly tumbling after,"

Mildred hummed, tugging off the ladder toward the fireplace.

Ethel had finished her work at the other end and was making her way toward Margaret and her group. Suddenly the door was thrown open, and a guard cried, "The Freshies are on the stairs!"

"Here, Margaret, climb on our shoulders and tack the last strand," Ethel urged, pushing her hammer and tacks into Margaret's hands.

It was the work of half a minute for the girls to lift Margaret to the mantel and steady her there while she fastened the last end.

"Can't hold the door another minute!" came

from Mary Marsh. Margaret hammered desperately; one more whack would make it secure. There was a giving of doors and in rushed the frantic freshmen. Ethel snapped out the light. Margaret gave the final bang, lost her balance, and jumped back over the girls' heads, landing in the circle of dark-bewildered freshmen with their roll of bunting. One of their number turned on the light. The picture was too much for all. Margaret sat in an abject, laughing heap on the vivid green bunting, the astonished freshmen gazing at her. Conquering and conquered were tangled up together.

"'Oh, backward, turn backward, O Time, in thy flight,
Make me a freshman again just for to-night!'"

sang Mildred, still perched upon the ladder by the fireplace, hugely enjoying her friend's plight.

Then Sue Brown, the ringleader of the freshmen, turned and whispered something to the girl next to her. Margaret felt herself suddenly unseated, and before either she or her mates could prevent, the freshmen began to roll her toward the hall door. Mildred was the first to rally the sophomore forces, and start toward their captain's rescue. The impetus of the dash was so great that for a moment there was a scene nearer a football scrimmage than anything else. Ethel alone

had kept her head, and, turning off the light, took advantage of the tussle to set Margaret free. When the light came on again, she stood, swathed in bunting, amid a group of friends; and the freshmen, much disheveled, were in a defensive huddle near the doors. Suddenly in the door appeared two senior and junior proctors. The tumult had been unprecedented in the history of the hall.

The sophomores, however, were not to be awed. Their blood was up. In hushed tones they began to sing:

> **Ta ta, babies, run along to your beddies.**
> **Down on Mater's pillows put your worried heads;**
> **Sugar plums you'll dream of soon,**
> **Candy tarts, and p'raps the moon —**

The proctors interfered at this point. The time for their songs was not now. At five-thirty it would be their privilege to rouse the drowsy slumberers, but not at twelve. So the defeated freshmen and the proctors departed, and the sophomores, after giving the finishing touches to the decorations, even to tying big yellow bows on the freshmen's chairs, retired to snatch a few feverish winks of sleep before the excitement of the next day should begin.

At just five-thirty o'clock, on the morning of that eventful twenty-second of November, the sopho-

mores stole from their rooms, clad in warm bath-robes, and tiptoed cautiously up to the room of the freshman captain, Sue Brown. Silently they squatted in a semicircle opposite the door. Then, at a signal from Mildred, they began to sing, in untiring persistency through all its refrains, the following words to the tune of "Forty-nine Blue Bottles a Hangin' on the Wall":

Ten-and-two green freshmen a-sleeping in the hall,
Sophs one freshman wake, she rubs her sleepy eyes,
And there's ten-and-one green freshmen a-sleeping in the hall.

Ten-and-one green freshmen a-sleeping in the hall,
One meets a sophomore a-hurrying all around,
And there's nine-and-one green freshmen a-sleeping in the hall.

Nine-and-one green freshmen a-sleeping in the hall,
Till one hears a clash and runs to Captain Brown,
And there's eight-and-one green freshmen a-sleeping in the hall.

Eight-and-one green freshmen a-sleeping in the hall,
She knows the crash and hurries all around,
And there's seven-and-one green freshmen a-dressing in the hall.

Seven-and-one green freshmen a-dressing in the hall,
One hears a sophomore tack, faints one freshman green,
And there's six-and-one green freshmen a-hurrying to the scene.

Six-and-one green freshmen a-hurrying to the scene,
Peeps one freshman in and sees the sophomore bunting,
And there's five-and-one green freshmen a-crowding round the door.

Five-and-one green freshmen a-crowding round the door,
Drops one freshman in, the rest a-sprawling on the floor,
And there's one-and-four green freshmen a-gazing at the stars.

Four-and-one green freshmen a-gazing at the stars,
Gets one a bright idea and hurries it around.
And there's three-and-one green freshmen a-playing nine pins in the hall.

Three-and-one green freshmen a-playing nine pins in the hall,
Sophs seize their bunting and drive them to the door,
And there's two-and-one green freshmen a-huddling in the dark.

Two-and-one green freshmen a-huddling in the dark,
Proctor takes one freshman and hurries her away,
And there's one-and-one green freshmen a-looking sheepish in the hall.

One-and-one green freshmen a-looking sheepish in the hall,
Sophs scare one more and send her off to bed,
And there's nought-and-one green freshman a-shrinking fast away.

As the singing progressed, doors began to open all along the corridor. Here and there sleepy objects crawled out, huddled up in front of half-open doors, laughed in spite of themselves, then crawled back to deserted beds, not too long occupied. The song never ceased, never varied, as they passed from freshman door to freshman door. On each new floor they began the verses all over again and beat them through to the end. Bedroom slippers, powder-puffs, books, and various other bouquets greeted their progress in the sleep-murdering crusade. The protests were loudest from the juniors and freshmen, but even the seniors, their sister

class, showed signs of restiveness under its monotony. At just seven they crept back to their rooms to get ready for breakfast.

When Margaret and Ethel reached their room on "Fifth Avenue," they found Katharine Bird, their roommate, already up and dressed. Despite the fact that she was a junior, the sister class of the freshmen, her interest was keen in the sophomore fun. The two girls in consequence felt no hesitation in recounting the day's lark to her.

A year's association with Katharine, from whom Mildred, Ethel, and Margaret had received their first initiation into college life, had made their interests one. Three of the other junior members of the octet, Araminta Briggs, Polly Waters, and Flossy Barnes were back, and as much at home in the new quarters on "Fifth Avenue" as they had been in twenty-nine "Pie Alley," Margaret's and Katharine's room the year before.

The change of residence had come about very naturally. Upon their return to college in the fall, Katharine and Margaret had found the large, three-room suite on the second floor unexpectedly given up. This enabled them to carry out a scheme to reduce Ethel Hall's expenses, which they had seen no way to do when they parted in June.

By a special arrangement with the matron and dean, Ethel's part in the suite would be less than half what she would pay in a room by herself, and she need know nothing of their part in making this possible.

CHAPTER II

THE YELLOW OR THE GREEN

THE intervening hours between the early morning serenade and the contests in the gymnasium at ten o'clock were very busy ones for the sophomores. Every avenue of approach to the gymnasium must be watched, each group of freshmen challenged lest that banner should be smuggled into the building. The sophomores were determined to follow up the victory of the night before by a day of triumphs. When the hour arrived, it seemed to them that no vigilance could have been stricter to insure this longed-for consummation, and Margaret, the captain of the basket ball team, felt confident that her team was ready to meet triumphantly that of the freshmen.

Each of the four classes of Ainsley had a corner of the big gymnasium gallery draped with its respective color. Back of each were the girls belonging to that special class, as many as could be packed in. They were all in white, distinguished in group by their class color only. Under the gallery, on the floor of the building, were four other

groups, packed closely on stands the shape of reversed pyramids. On one side were the two sister classes, the freshmen and juniors; on the other, the seniors and sophomores. Distinguishing each company was the class color in great profusion.

Suddenly there was a scream of wildest triumph from the freshman end of the gallery. Those from beneath the balcony rushed toward the center of the floor. There stood one of the freshmen defiantly flinging the gorgeous green banner to the breeze, 1912 in brilliant gold, proclaiming to all their success. Girls hurried from the floor to the gallery, jumping up and down, running hither and thither, waving pennants, cheering. On the sophomores' faces were consternation, bewilderment. Had they not searched that very girl, challenged every freshman or group of freshmen entering the gym that morning!

"That tangle of yours in their green bunting was prophetic, Baby Stuart," Mildred cried, as Margaret rushed up to her in the turmoil.

The sophomores were left no time to solve the problem. There was more fun coming at their expense. In the midst of it all, Katharine Bird was on her feet before the freshman-junior stands beating time.

"Now, one, two, three!"

"Zh-zh-zh-zhee-e-e-eee!" Katharine held the voices to the last sound with a prolonged rise, her arm trailing upwards and holding its poise for fully a quarter of a minute. So like a sky-rocket was the effect that a round of applause broke from every part of the room, even from the sophomores and seniors, as she finished. Katharine turned in her vivacious way, bowed to all sides in true conductor fashion, reminding her classmates and the other girls who knew her in her sophomore year, of the gracious manners of "Monsieur Beaucaire," the character she had impersonated at the Thanksgiving fête the year before.

Without waiting for the cheering wholly to subside, the girls began to sing to the air of "Mary and Martha," their song learned for the occasion, some lines of which were filled in impromptu to suit the turn of affairs:

The sophomores and seniors have hunted all around,
The sophomores and seniors have hunted all around,
The sophomores and seniors have hunted all around,
To find that freshman banner,

Crying, "Who has that banner green,"
Who has that banner green?
Who has that banner green?
It must not fly to-day."

They painted yellow the dining-rooms,
They painted yellow the dining-rooms,
They painted yellow the dining-rooms,
And tied their bunting up.

Crying, "Oh, where's our captain, oh?
Oh, where's our captain, oh?
Oh, where's our captain, oh?
That made the gallant leap?"

The freshman bunting's swaddling her,
The freshman bunting's swaddling her,
The freshman bunting's swaddling her,
Your gallant Baby Stuart.

Floating, do you see that banner now,
Do you see that banner now,
Do you see that banner now,
You tried so hard to pinch?

A padding warm for a freshman's coat,
A padding warm for a freshman's coat,
A padding warm for a freshman's coat,
It 'scaped the soph-xray.

Instantly upon the completion of this song the sophomores and seniors took the floor and began their retort, Mildred Arthur leading, her fun not the least daunted by the witticisms at her classmates' expense. The song was set to the tune of "Massa's in the cold, cold ground." It was a daring piece of sophomore boast in face of present defeat, and before the coming battle. The second stanza had to be made to fit the conditions:

Round de galleries am a-ringin'
De freshmen's mournful song,
While de sophomores am a-singin'
Happy as de day am long.

CHORUS

Down on de gym floor,
Hear dat mournful sound,
All de freshies am a-weepin',
Soph'mores got de game for shore!

Where de banner am a-floppin'
O'er de polished rail,
Dere bright freshies am a-hoppin',
Never thinkin' they can fail. Chorus.

When de freshies all were sleepin',
In dere beds so bold,
'Twas hard to hear those soph'mores creepin',
Cayse it was so dark and cold. Chorus.

Now de orange buntin's floating,
O'er de dining-room,
Now de banner green am croaking,
"Freshies, you hab laughed too soon." Chorus.

Freshies love de banner's color,
Cayse it am so bright.
Soon dey'll sadly change dat color,
Cayse it lost de fight. Chorus.

Dey will not work to-morrow,
Cayse de tear-drops flow;
Dey'll try to drive away der sorrow,
Harpin' on dat lined coat so! Chorus.

A real Topsy could not have given the part better than Mildred gave it, spiritedly seconded by her supporters, and the efforts were heartily cheered by the great throng. When both teams came out upon the floor, the two contesting parties

sang songs; through the din names of different players could just be heard.

Then the whistle sounded; the two captains, Margaret Winters and Sue Brown, gave their signals to their teams, and the jumping centers took their places. The silence was tense. At the first toss-off the ball went spinning toward the freshman goal, accompanied by wild cheering from their side. Before the sophomore guard could prevent, the ball had been tossed by Sue Brown straight into the basket, making the score 2 to 0 in favor of the freshmen. The green pennants could not wave frantically enough to express their feelings. Margaret was going from one player to another giving whispered directions.

Again the whistle sounded. The centers were in place; and every girl in that throng was eagerly leaning forward to catch each play. This time the ball started again toward the freshman goal, but it did not reach the alert forward. Mary Marsh caught it in mid-air, twirled it over her head with a backward stroke; it was caught by the side center, passed to the jumping center, and at a number-signal from Margaret tossed to her. Before her guard could reach the place, Margaret had it in the basket and the sophomores were storming the room with their triumph.

Fight as the two sides would, brilliant as the plays were on both sides, rapid and accurate as were the team-plays, the first half whistle blew time with the score a tie. Singing again filled in the intermission. Yet when that whistle blew for the last half, attention was at once caught. Would it be the yellow or the green that had "laughed too soon"? The next ten minutes would tell the story.

"Stick to your girl! Don't let her get an inch from you! Use the number-signal! Pass! Don't risk long throws! We've got to win!" Margaret's words carried determination to every one of her team.

The first five minutes of the second half were taken up by one side or the other's getting the ball out-of-bounds. Then Margaret overreached herself, in jumping for the ball, and went over the line. This gave her opponent the chance to gain a point by tossing the ball into her basket. With all that counterplay of intense thought riveted upon her, Sue Brown took her place on the ten-foot line, and measured the space with her eye. One feint, then another, then straight into that basket she shot the ball. The uproar was deafening.

The umpire was again balancing her ball over

the jumping centers. There were only four minutes left to save the day. Even Mildred was looking serious. It began to look pretty dark for her class. After the first toss-off, the ball went out of bounds, giving it to the yellows. Back it went into the center, was caught by the greens, and reached Sue Brown's hands. Then a shrill signal from Margaret woke up the sophomore guard. The ball was struck to the center as it left the captain's hands, passed to the other side center, and tossed high into the air toward Margaret. Leaping like a wildcat, she caught it and, almost before touching her feet to the floor, had it in the basket, making the score 4 to 3 in the sophomores' favor. Scarcely were the figures on the board and the players hurrying to their places in the confusion when the whistle blew for game. The sophomores had won.

Margaret and Sue hurried towards each other and shook hands heartily. Katharine ran out eagerly and gave Margaret a hearty hug, then she went off with the freshman captain and the crowds of their supporters toward their end of the floor. The sophomores and seniors from galleries and floor lifted Margaret into a tiny automobile covered with the yellow, and drawn by eager girls; forming a large ring about each team, they began

SUE BROWN TOOK HER PLACE ON THE TEN-FOOT LINE

their fun. In each ring all kinds of antics were being performed. Member after member of the teams was run around the rings again and again till their energies seemed to have spent themselves, and the weary teams were allowed to make their way to the dressing rooms.

"Oh, Kiddie, I'm so proud of you!" Katharine whispered, squeezing Margaret's arm as she pushed her way through the crowd to the dressing room.

"Could never have done it, Katharine, if I hadn't been such a boy when a youngster, and learned to jump. I can't help wishing Bob could have seen the results of his training," Margaret confided to Katharine that night when they were at last alone and quiet for the first time in twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER III

COLLEGE IDYLLS

"THE shadows of senior dignity are beginning to darken my declining college years," sighed Araminta, throwing herself into Katharine's tempting morris chair the next afternoon. "If I could only throw them off as you do, Puck, or take them in Flossy's prosaic way! There's that awful English 12! I've tried in vain to evade my fate. Nothing else I could take to ease the load."

"Poor Mrs. Atlas! I'm so sorry for you. Do hitch the load on to the senior shoulder, my dear Araminta; I'm afraid your junior one will get one-sided," Katharine advised from her work at the desk.

"You're absolutely no judge for the rest of us earthly mortals, Puck. I know that by the time I've had back that heart-rending, mark-splitting pack of themes I'll be gray around the temples, a sure sign of overwork."

"All of which goes to show how wise I was to take that load upon my giddy sophomore shoul-

ders. But far weightier matters are pressing upon us, my dear," Katharine replied impressively.

"As if anything could be weightier!"

"A check, a check! All my own, too!"

"Let my famished eyes rest upon it, Baby Stuart, this instant!" Araminta cried as they gathered about Margaret after her dramatic entrance.

"Fifty dollars, so late in the month! Who ever knew an orthodox college girl with such an amount?"

"Well, I'll explain when you calm yourselves," holding the check aloft. "I earned all of it this summer at home, at the expense of every friend I have," pausing for her words to take due effect upon her audience. "Not one but would run at sight of my shadow. But it's worth it all,— the relief to my feelings. That's my share of the scholarship fund," flapping the check down in front of Katharine, who was still sitting at the desk.

The fund to which Margaret referred was the one earned by the girls the year before to help May Keating, Margaret's senior, through the rest of the year. They had all promised to raise money during the summer vacation to complete this sum for a scholarship.

"There are twenty-five dollars lacking to make up the sum. All have done their stunts but Topsy," Katharine added mercilessly.

"Oh, Puck, honestly I meant to! How could anybody be expected to take up collections on shipboard, coaches, and in railway compartments, or pile up funds traveling! What's started it up again? I thought it had died a natural death or was gathering moss in the bank."

"Direst need, Miss Topsy," Flossy answered relentlessly; "we have a social problem to solve worse than any Prof. Carter ever gave us."

"Woe's me! A long farewell to all my fudge-ice creams, sodas, matinees — how can a fellow be expected to reform in so many ways at once!" sinking in a meek little heap on the floor at Araminta's feet.

"No one, my dear, has so far departed from her senses as to expect it," Polly assured her, adjusting the hoops on her embroidery.

"That's it; I'm never taken seriously. How can you expect me to?"

"Well, brushing reforms aside for the moment, Puck, what's the latest?" Polly asked.

"Girls, Miss Deering —"

"No wonder I couldn't reform!"

"Miss Deering," glancing icily at Mildred, who was silenced for the moment by Araminta's hand, "has just sent word to the charter promulgators of the —"

"Puck, if you commit such a word again I'll depart. I really can't after that session with the conference man; it's the dram too much!" Araminta protested.

"The charter promulgators —" prompted Polly.

"Of the fund," Katharine continued, "should now be ready to disburse —" (groans from Araminta). "In plainer English for your overwrought mind, dear Araminta, we're asked seriously by our dean to take upon our hands one who has been of our circle, but is now deserted by her foster father and left with only her New York friends to do what they can to keep her in college —"

"The Princess!" came in a breath from several.

"You level at my meaning."

"And worst of all, she can't even make a bed, darn a stocking — why, I could do those!"

"Yes, Kiddie, more or less, but this lady, as you all know, is a brand from the Tower of Babel —

Hottentot, Chinese, Jap, and a sprinkling of French, so you mustn't expect too much of the mixture."

"That's where she gets her adorable manners and indescribable clothes," Polly added.

"I told Miss Deering we'd do our best to cast about her our practical atmosphere, moral props, et cetera, but no one but Venus should attempt her draperies."

"No, we'd spoil her to reform her. If we take her, it must be intact," Araminta concluded.

"Girls, you know we can never give her enough from the fund for all her frills. We've got to put some real sense in her head if we have to drive it there with hatpins!"

"I'd just like to see even you do it, Flossy. I went downtown the other day with her, and she bought six pairs of silk stockings, and two satin petticoats,— the kind that just go with her,— and five pairs of gloves! She has no end of them in her room, just a little soiled or ripped. I demurred gently, humbly, almost telling her the reason, and she sweetly beamed,— you know that beam,— and said, 'Why, but I couldn't wear cotton, now could I, really?'" The murmur from the girls showed their appreciation of the case.

"I can hear those siren tones now! No, girls, Araminta's right; intact's the word," Polly decided.

"Well, I've been her devoted slave —"

"Crush, Mildred, is really the proper word, you know — only to crushes do people hand over their pack of themes for artistic modification," was Katharine's thrust.

"Though trampled to earth I'll rise in my own defense! She asked for them — I'd like to have seen one of you refuse! You know, Puck, you're as badly crushed as any one."

"We admit, Topsy, my dear, our deep devotion, but deplore that you, who are so devoted to reform, should be the one to lead her from the paths of college morality." Poor Mildred's resolve the previous year to reform would persist in facing her at every turn.

"But, Puck, what's the plan of campaign?" Flossy demanded.

"There isn't any. Hence this solemn conference."

"Well, what's done is done. But we at least ought to inveigle her into mending those silk stockings and gloves so that no more raids need be made on the puny bank account for such absurd frills."

"Miss Deering has already delicately started her in the simple life by persuading her to take the little corner gable-room upstairs in this hall, and now she depends on our genius to give her some moral support."

"I have it, I have it! Darn, darn; Polly, all such dainties must be put aside; stockings instead; discuss economy; Mildred can dissertate upon the foolish expense of fudge-ice cream and matinees; we'll all talk of the joys of the simple life,— in fine, the play's the thing to drive it home!" Araminta exclaimed.

"Well, girls, little as we're addicted to such stern realities, I would far rather do it than return to slavery," Polly commented.

"Girls, to rise to this climax of our existence we've got to 'screw our courage to the sticking point' and resist those darling wiles! I fear me we are too full o' the milk of human weakness to take the nearer way," Araminta expostulated.

"We've just two hundred dollars on hand at present. What May returns this spring will help. What did that shopping expedition cost, Baby Stuart?"

"Twenty-five dollars."

"Of course, we can depend on your reform fund for that amount, Topsy?"

A sigh was the only reply Mildred gave to Katharine's hit.

"Topsy, would a cup of my soothing tea console you?" Polly queried.

"Yes—um! Even a scalding would not be felt now."

"Oh, Ethel, couldn't you get an express cart to assist you in lugging home your books?" Katharine asked, as Ethel entered with her arms full of books from the library.

"I don't know, Katharine, but I'll have to to get all the reading done for the theme," Ethel declared, dropping her load of books on a chair.

"Please, please, Ethel, I had almost forgotten that dreadful subject in this strenuous new phase of life!" Araminta groaned.

"My Guardian, I have needed you!" Mildred complained. "I can just see how you'll enjoy tackling this new victim's reform. She purrs when I sit for an improvement; what will it be with the Princess!"

A very gentle knock was that instant heard. In response to Katharine's "come," a tall, willowy girl entered. Her eyes had no definable color,—lustrous, dreamy depths that made you think of stories you've dreamed or read. Her skin was of ivory clearness with a faint pink beneath it, and

her glossy black hair was clustered about the face, and coiled in a knot at the nape of her neck. She wore a soft, clingy satin dress in a shade of blue that suggested far-off lands where blue skies forever dream in blue, blue depths of shimmering lakes.

"Oh, Polly, I love to see you pour tea — the gold-edged cup this time, please; just a nabisco. I felt like this," settling back among the pillows.

All admitted that Polly poured with fewer flourishes when Mella was present. There was always a difference when she was by; yet no one could have told just what it was. Mella Cosimo had come to the college in the fall, attracting instant attention because of her unusual beauty and singular charm of manner; yet she had seemed to repel all approaches, until Katharine had discovered her loneliness and adopted her. The girls had resented the intrusion, but shamed by Katharine's democratic spirit, and really fascinated as they came under Mella's spell, had finally accepted her as one of the group. She provoked, puzzled, and held them by turns. Now that she was in need, each girl would take hold of the problem in her characteristic way. To Margaret it would be a task to be undertaken in her impulsive, energetic fashion; to Polly a diversion, rather interesting;

to Araminta's dramatic mind, a delightful comedy or a possible tragedy; Flossy, much disgusted with her lack of common sense in most ways, would nevertheless give very valuable aid; Katharine, who never appeared to carry any burden, would yet guide and manage the whole situation; Mildred was in no way to be depended upon beyond the whim of the moment.

Despite the serious resolves of this jolly circle of girls, the conversation, as always, was kept in channels that seemed to fit the new member; nor was any step taken this time toward the "reform" to be effected in this irresponsible, fascinating alien.

"Well, Katharine, I don't believe we can ever do what Miss Deering's asked of us," Margaret declared when the girls had gone.

"Does look pretty big, Katharine."

"Now, girls, if you want to take this in camel-fashion, you may; but I'm not going to grow a hump over it; I prefer my present proportions. You know we've not got to do it all in a minute," with that quick, bright smile that removed mountains.

CHAPTER IV

"AND ROWLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME"

"WHAT a stewpan sort of a name — Carl Fry! Think of it, Baby Stuart, an entire man to yourself — a brother of one of those friends from whom you wrung your fund this summer — now own up!" Mildred cried, holding the card aloft as she danced about the little study on the Saturday night following the conference over Mella Cosimo's fortunes.

"What are you talking about, Mildred? — a man! Never heard of him!" Margaret declared positively when she finally succeeded in getting the card from Mildred.

Margaret had just returned from a conference with Miss Deering over the fund, and some of her own work which was not giving satisfaction, and was feeling somewhat "low in her mind," as Katharine always called her discouraged spells.

"I know, Katharine, there's some silly mistake."

"Oh, no, Kiddie, there's no mistake; there can't

be; the gallant *Rowland* will return to his tower at eight-thirty. He wants no other than the Margaret Winters from K. C."

"The plot assumes depth! Margaret, don your most spell-binding gown — the one Bob most approves," Mildred advised, well knowing how her flings about this favorite brother touched her friend.

"Come, Kiddie, only fifteen minutes! The lavender one! You must not keep such an ardent knight-errant waiting. Now if this bashful hesitancy were from Cinderella! But from one whose every breath has been drawn in masculine zephyrs — well, it's unseemly," Katharine teased as Margaret still hesitated over the card. At this last spur she gave a disgusted toss of the head and went into her room.

"I'll wager my spring hat it's a fraternity stunt for initiation, or else it's a friend of Bob's," Katharine declared, studying the card. Mildred looked on with an amused expression.

"A friend of Bob's!" struggling with a hook caught in her lace yoke. "You must think I've lived all these years with Bob Winters and don't know every friend of his, at least by name, whom he'd send to call on me!"

"Oh, Baby Stuart, just as if you could make us

believe that your acquaintance extends over all the rounds of a college man's hail-fellow list!" laughed Katharine.

A tap on the door admitted Polly, Araminta, and Flossy. The girls were always careless about Saturday night study-hour.

"Wilt kindly explain the reason for this dressiness, my dear — oh, fussing! Distinguished name. Does he belong to the Bobonian circle?" Araminta ran on.

"Don't know him?" came in a horrified chorus from the three newcomers.

"And you are donning your fuss-togs to greet him! Well, I feel the octet has changed!"

"Oh, no, Polly, it dropped last year. You've forgotten the Wayside Inn."

"So I had, Flossy — probably the very man under an assumed name."

"It makes me homesick," Polly sighed, gazing thoughtfully at the card as she cuddled herself up among the pillows of the window seat.

"You're welcome to him, Polly. Oh, I wish you would go down. He'll never know the difference — I know I'm the victim of some trick," looking hard over at Mildred. "I just know that I'm going to be made a goose of."

"Don't mind anything so simple as that.

You'll wear the feathers gracefully, Kiddie," Katharine sparkled, giving her excited roommate a soothing pat.

Just then a tap on the door brought them all to their feet. It was the card. All began to shower directions on Margaret.

"Enter and pause upon the threshold — just gracefully teeter, for one second, thus, then modestly touch your lips with the tips of your fingers — 'oh, sir, there must be some mistake — I — I really do not know you!'" Araminta illustrated.

"Blush, that's so vital!" Flossy added, "and then back out."

"My dear Mr. Frying Pan, excuse me for sputtering, but this is —"

"Will you all keep still! I'd like one moment to think what I'm going to say."

"If Bob were only here!"

"There, Topsy, that's the first sensible thing said; don't I wish he were! What do you suppose he may be?"

"My dear, the only way is to approach and find out. I'm sure you're fully equipped with advice," Flossy answered.

"Oh, my shoes! I haven't on my pumps!"

"Here, quick, pumps approach; the man waits in the room below!" Araminta gasped.

Mildred pulled her into the chair, and Katharine and Flossy soon had the change made, the girls nearly upsetting the chair in their merriment at this flustered state of their mate.

"Now, my dear Baby Stuart, child of my tender years, go to thy fate; *Rowland* waiteth for thee below!"

With two girls on each side, Margaret started for the front stairs. No amount of persuasion could rid her of her lively escorts till she had reached the head of the stairs. Here they gave her their parting instructions in stage whispers.

Margaret advanced very slowly and quietly to the reception-room door. Here she paused. At the farther end of the double rooms, his back partially towards her, was a tall young fellow, leaning over the table. One hand was deep in his pocket; with the other he was turning over the leaves of a magazine, whistling softly a familiar opera air. The side and back of his head showed a mass of dark curly hair, rather longer than the average. He was clad in evening suit. Thus much a glance showed her. Then she advanced into the room. The rustle of her dress attracted his attention, and turning quickly he bowed very gallantly and came eagerly towards her, his hand extended so cordially that she could do no less than

meet him half way. The smile assumed the renewal of old acquaintance.

"Miss Winters, I'm so glad to meet you again. I do hope I've not intruded too rudely upon Saturday night quiet-hour."

Margaret motioned him to a chair, and seated herself rather daintily on the edge of the tête. So far at least she had not committed herself. She would await his next move.

"I was passing through the city — felt I couldn't go back without a chat for old-times sake. You'll pardon my crust in coming a second time."

There were no old times for the sake of which he was feeling so friendly, but if this were a fraternity stunt she would be equal to the play.

"I might have missed your second call had the meeting been a longer one," Margaret ventured.

"Meeting? You were not so religiously inclined in the old town." The eyebrows moved up a trifle, she couldn't feel so sure of the expression in the gray eyes. "Do all colleges turn out such devotees, Miss Winters?"

"Well, Mr. Fry, that depends on temperament — I think that's what you call it." She was enjoying the situation, and her caller smiled back at the rising fun in her eyes. Margaret's fun always began there. He had pleasant laugh

wrinkles and a mouth full of very white teeth. These points she noted while waiting for his next shot.

"I was thinking of those nights in the dead of winter — such a night as this reminds me of it — church bells ringing, but the hill calling, calling! My! but will you ever forget that night Bob and the seven fellows took that skid under the freight train?"

Remember! wasn't Bob steering that coaster, and hadn't her heart been in her mouth for days over what might have been the result? She almost gasped at the cleverness of the shot. Was he really an old girlhood friend? But she would wait before striking her colors.

"But Ainsley's hills have no such charms for you? A slide on that hill was worth forty pews — but a college chapel pew — with Ainsley girls in, might be different!"

This last had given Margaret time to retreat to cover. "That would depend on a few side issues," ignoring the hill.

"Oh, yes, I can think of a few — how far off the faculty were, the dean especially."

"Not with me. I like the dean very much — a good friend of mine — most girls feel that way, don't you think?"

"Really, Miss Winters, I'm so little acquainted with college girls en masse that I must wait till I'm better informed. The dean here is so good to you all evidently, that I don't wonder you feel so — letting you have such larks as you told of last year."

Margaret caught her breath. This was a close aim; but wait, it might have been just a lucky hit. "To just which one do you refer?"

"Well, theater parties — Hallowe'en larks." He was evidently not quite so sure of his aim. "Almost up to the times in K. C. we fellows used to have — doctors' signs on undertakers' shops, furrier's ads on the horse doctor's door — these are more in our line."

Margaret, taken off her guard, laughed merrily. How well she remembered Bob's larks, and her fear that her father might hear of them. "Yes, girls always have to do such tame things, you know," rebellion in her tones.

His sally had forced out Margaret's real feelings. Pushing back a troublesome lock from his forehead he tried another shot. "Speaking of stunts, is Miss Marlowe still your favorite actress?"

"Girls usually do prefer her — perhaps you don't know that?"

"You seem to forget, Miss Winters, that I am very ignorant of such technical matters in your world — never'd dare bet closely on such matters as twist of hair, color of eyes, gowns worn by college girls at Touraine luncheons — any more than to guess they might wear brown voile gowns and picture hats." It was said innocently enough, but the eyes looked so mischievously into hers, that for a moment she was disconcerted. He had certainly described her outfit of the year before when she and Mildred had taken luncheon with the two Dartmouth fellows. How did he know of this if someone had not told him?

"If this is a specimen of your amateur work, what won't you be able to do when an adept?"

Mr. Fry laughed. "I never felt so much encouraged in my life, Miss Winters; if only all girls would be so helpful."

Just then the gong sounded in the hall, and, yes, Margaret was sure that she heard a whistle outside.

"Must I go — does that mean lights out?"

"It's for quiet-hour — a sort of private revival meeting in our own hearts," wickedly. Both laughed.

"My dear Miss Winters," rising as he spoke and reaching for his coat and hat, "I can't tell you

what this heart-to-heart talk has meant to me; I hope I have not intruded too much. Any message to old K. C.?"

"Yes, tell them that one of their citizens is learning wisdom. New friends are dear, you know, but the old ones are unforgettable."

They had already reached the front door. The commotion everywhere sounded little like "quiet-hour." Margaret glanced cautiously up the stairs. She was sure that she heard a giggle, but she could see no one.

"Thank you so much for this helpful evening. You've done me a big turn." The smile was so frank and the hand pressure so hearty that Margaret felt sure she understood what he meant.

"Don't forget my messages to K. C.," in a tone easily heard by the girls at the head of the stairs.

He had gone. Margaret ran up the stairs, pushed her way through the crowd of girls, never stopping till she reached her own room.

"Oh, Margaret, we're thrilled to the bone, consumed with curiosity! It's a K. C. man, isn't it? Adorable manners, so distinguished — relieve at once our devouring curiosity!" Araminta pleaded, forcing Margaret on to the window seat, all the group gathering about her and all talking at once.

"Now own up you don't know all that distinguished list of Bob's friends!" Mildred twitted.

"Girls, I wouldn't have missed his call for anything — I'm too excited to talk!" rising and beginning to unfasten her dress.

"Guess, girls, we'll have to endure the suspense! Baby Stuart's beyond the speaking point, so impressive has been the interview."

"There's the second gong. Behold what havoc a man works in our ranks!" Araminta exclaimed, starting toward the door.

A few parting admonitions and all were gone. Katharine had not joined in the fun nor did she now speak, but went quietly on making her preparations for the night.

"Who was it, Kiddie?" she asked finally when Margaret was freed from her dress by Katharine's help.

"I never set eyes on him!" Then followed the interview as realistically as Margaret could describe it.

"It must have been thrilling," Ethel sighed so impressively that both girls laughed. Ethel's way of taking things was always a surprise.

"Yes, honestly, Ethel, I felt just as if I were in a story book. How I did wish for you, Katharine, to see if I was doing an awfully bold thing.

What do you s'pose Bob will say?" in such deep concern that Katharine could not suppress a smile.

"Now, Kiddie, I know he'll think you are a brick. I'm proud of the way you carried out the stunt. Of course, it's a fraternity one or —"

"A trick of Mildred's!"

"Margaret, I have a feeling that this is going to be very important in your life — it's so — so romantic. It's like a book coming true," Ethel mused just as she was getting into bed. It was all so different from anything which had ever come into the prosaic, hard-working life of this romance-loving girl.

CHAPTER V

ALL THEIR WORLD'S A PLAY

ONE of the greatest events of the year at Ainsley is the public play of the Dramatic Club. The parts for open-dramatics are usually decided in this way: members of the Dramatic Club put in their names for parts which they desire to take, then a time is set for the trial before a committee of alumnæ and active members. The places are always very eagerly sought, and often those failing to make the cast are glad to take a place in the mob.

The play decided upon this year was no less pretentious than "Romeo and Juliet." Katharine had been given the part of *Romeo;* Margaret was to be the old nurse, and Mildred, *Mercutio.* To the surprise of every one, Mella had shown such decided dramatic ability that Katharine had coaxed her into trying for *Juliet.* When she had gone through the potion scene with such depths of feeling, she was unanimously given the place.

"It's the blood of those Spanish dons from their cruel dungeons speaking in those eyes," Kath-

arine declared; and, indeed, the fire might come from almost any of her dark line of ancestry.

"If you can't make love looking into those fiery depths, you're no true lover, Puck," Araminta commented upon hearing the verdict.

Long and many were the rehearsals, indescribably funny the incidents at some of them. Many a time were the proctors known to prowl about the region of "Fifth Avenue" during study-hour only to go away when the deep and heart-stirring tones of *Romeo* were heard. But one night the octet fell into disgrace for disturbing two floors with their domestic tragedy.

There had been a gathering of the clan after the ringing of the gong. Even Flossy, who had vowed the year before, after a long and heroic struggle to raise her share of the fund by selling her famous fudge, that never again would she willingly mix another spoonful of the delicious substance, on this particular evening had been inveigled into yielding, and was deep in its mysteries. Spirits had reached a very high pitch that evening. Katharine was lost in her part of *Romeo,* and each one in turn had been adored and implored, Araminta calmly tripping her in her flights whenever, in her superior dramatic knowledge, she felt Katharine's delivery called for comment. Fully fifteen

girls were in the room and outside the door watching the performance.

In one corner stood a stepladder arrangement made of chairs piled up, and draped with a soft Turkish rug. Mella's protest, "I could act it better, Kathreno, with pretty things like those *Juliet* should have," had caused Polly to go for her couch cover.

"'Romeo! Humors! Madman! Passion! Lover! Appear thou in the likeness of the sigh!'" Mildred called in her rôle of *Mercutio* seeking his lovelorn friend.

But *Romeo* heeded not. The impassioned words of the garden scene were upon his lips, "'Soft! What light through yonder window breaks!'" Mella appeared above the drapery of the ladder. "'It is the east and Juliet is the sun!'"

The cautious glance backward, as if in very truth the old nurse were calling, the smile so realistic, brought rousing cheers from her audience.

"'She speaks! Oh, speak again, bright angel!'" Katharine was exaggerating the raptures of the language to the infinite delight of the girls.

At the same time Mildred was spinning off in her liveliest mood *Mercutio's* quips and witticisms,

making a ludicrous accompaniment to the lover's scene.

Juliet had just said in Mella's softest and most musical tones:

"'Parting is such sweet sorrow that
I shall say good-by till it be to-morrow,'"

and Katharine was throwing her most ardent tokens of devotion when Mildred again broke into *Mercutio's* attack upon *Tybalt,* using her fencing weapon as a sword. Abetting the fun, Araminta had assumed the rôle of *Tybalt.*

"'Come, sir, your passado!'"

"'Gentle Mercutio, put up thy rapier,'" Katharine cried, turning from Mella at the sound of her cue.

"'I am hurt!'" Mildred cried, at a thrust from Araminta's mimic sword, staggering backward; "'a plague o' both your houses! I am sped! Is he gone, and hath nothing?'" starting with the effort of a wounded man, Katharine with Araminta's help already manfully supporting her.

Flossy had just come from Margaret's and Ethel's room with the steaming pan of fudge. The warning cries from the girls came too late. Araminta sprang aside just in time to dodge the flying contents; Polly covered her head with a pillow, but her dainty ankle got a dab. With a

scream she rose only to tumble over Flossy and Mildred. Katharine got her senses first and began to scrape the hot contents from the cushion of the morris chair, and Ethel and Flossy soon had that on the floor cleaned up. But in the fray the teacups had been knocked off the table, and the crash coming after the gong had sounded, brought not only all the remaining girls to the scene but the senior proctors as well.

Mildred, still undaunted, turned the whole scene again into mirth by staggering about with the fudge spoon and exclaiming in *Mercutio's* mortal words, "'Ay, ay, a scratch, marry 'tis enough — 'twill serve! I'm peppered, I warrant, for this world,'" and staggered out, muttering as she went, "'Zounds, a dog, a rat, a mouse to scratch a man to death!'"

Katharine turned to the proctors, rag in hand from her scrubbing, and exclaimed,

> "'Now, Tybalt, take the villain back again,
> That late thou gavest me; Mercutio's soul
> Is but a little way above our heads,
> Staying for thee to keep him company.
> Either I or thou or both must go with him,'"

waving indefinitely to the reluctantly thinning groups of girls. There was nothing else for the proctors to do but laugh and surrender, as Katharine bowed to the cheering girls.

The days of rehearsal at last were over and the longed-for night had arrived. Although lectures had been attended, and lessons conned, yet all their world had been a play up to this time, seemingly.

"Now, *Juliet,*" Katharine directed, as she and Mella stood in the midst of a group of girls behind the scenes that night, "if I get balled up in my lines just say in those heart-mellowing tones, 'Oh, *Romeo, Romeo!*' and beam; the audience won't have an idea left in its classic brain to discover the parody on Billy."

The little amphitheater was packed with the academic and the otherwise of Ainsley's patrons. At these plays no men are admitted. Mildred was in her gayest tensity of excitement, unable, despite the many warnings from the stage managers, to resist many furtive peeks at the guests, through the apertures of the curtain. Once she had almost lost her balance in a too venturesome look. Finally, as the curtain went up on the first scene, she was so eager that she was caught almost in full view, and Margaret declared afterwards that she saw her wave to two people in the front row.

The play went smoothly on till the scene between *Mercutio,* the old nurse, and *Romeo.* As Mildred moved airily about the stage with her gay

banterings, Margaret, as the nurse, had just taken the fan with much flourish; suddenly she almost stopped short in her greeting, "'God ye good den, gentlemen,'" putting a long pause between "good den" and "gentlemen," for she saw Mildred deliberately flip a small wad of paper toward the audience. It was as dexterously caught by one of the conspicuously bewigged ladies in the front row with whom she had seen Mildred exchanging greetings as the curtain went up. Margaret finished her lines, but she was still drawn to the large shaking shoulders of the two guests. This was dangerous, and with desperate effort she took her eyes from them. She stumbled in many places, repeated "Sir" three times, her eyes again on the front row.

"'What wilt thou tell her, nurse?'" came from Katharine, and the entirely un-Shakespearean undertone, "Look at me!" At the same moment the tones of the prompter were heard. Margaret felt a hard pressure on her toe. She turned from gazing at a familiar ring upon the very large hand of one of the two guests, and began her lines:

"'I will tell her you do protest'"—

An undertone from Katharine, "I do," made Margaret nearly laugh through the other lines.

"Katharine, the two in front are men in women's clothes. I know it. One is *Rowland,*" Margaret cried as they left the stage.

"Why, Kiddie, it is the thought of thy mad brain — nonsense!" Katharine protested, hurrying Margaret to the dressing room.

"No, Katharine, it's the very ring he had on that night!"

"Now, Kiddie, what hair-brain stuff are you trying to conjure up? If there are twenty *Rowlands* there, just you tie your heart down where it belongs; don't let it leap over the footlights to him; you'll never get through that nurse's scene with Mella if you don't. You nearly tipped me over. Mella can never call you back as I did. Now do keep your eyes off them."

In the midst of the most impassioned part of her scene with *Juliet,* Katharine saw the large hand pressed adoringly to the heart, and felt sure that Margaret was right in her conjecture. Even Katharine was a bit disconcerted, came in on the wrong line, and threw Mella completely off the track, and but for a timely adoring embrace, in which moment she murmured the correct lines to Mella, the prompter's voice would have been heard again.

It was in the tomb-scene, however, where trou-

ble was awaiting them. Katharine, at first indignant, was soon overpowered with the fun of it. As she lay stretched out upon the floor of the tomb, she struggled so to keep from shaking with mirth, that the effort choked her. Slowly, awfully, the cough was coming! *Juliet* was waking out of her torpor. Would she ever do something — fall over her to save the situation! The first convulsion passed, she hoped, unnoticed; worse yet, she knew a sneeze was coming! *Juliet* at last was bending over her, dared she speak to this intense, high-strung child to whom every part of this play was real?

"Mella, scream! I've got to —" Katharine had her chance to sneeze! Mella started as if in very truth the dead had come to life. The dagger had fortunately already been grasped by her, else, even to those not really familiar with this tragic ending, what followed would have seemed a blunder. With the cry of a child frightened almost into spasms she threw her arms into the air and fell almost bodily on to Katharine. The impact would have stunned her had Katharine not caught her in her arms as she fell. Distinctly giggles were heard from the front row, not at all ladylike — the intruders were getting bold.

"Mella, Mella, quick, quick! Finish your

part!" The words brought her bewildered *Juliet* to her senses, and with quavering, trembling voice, grasping her dagger, she ended the scene.

This play had already revealed many sides before unknown of this protégé, but this last scene made Katharine realize how like a simple child at heart Mella really was.

The news of the presence of men at their play spread rapidly, and when the dressing-room was reached the keenest excitement was evident everywhere. Mildred was gay and unapproachable; Margaret highly wrought up, divided in feeling between anger and relish of the lark; but Katharine provokingly made fun of the whole idea.

CHAPTER VI

UNDER THE TUB THE SLIPPER GOES

"WHAT do you s'pose the matter is? Topsy, you are the nearest dressed; run, quick, and report, that's a dear child!" Polly pleaded, rubbing hard to get the paint off Katharine's face.

Mildred laughed tantalizingly, dancing around on one foot as she pulled a stocking on to the other. "I think it's probably the dean greeting some of her guests!" she retorted evasively.

Margaret stopped her search for her skirt and stared questioningly, then tossed her head knowingly.

"Girls! Girls! they were, they were — those two in front were men!"

"Men! What do you mean? Where?" from a chorus of voices, the girls all stopping in their various stages of change from actors to plain citizens to accost the bearer of this astounding news.

"Miss Deering challenged them and they ran out laughing past her. The girls are wild over it.

You know it's sure to mean no more open-dramatics!"

"Oh, where are my shoes — who's got my coat — here, do let's get out and see the fun!" as one and another snatched up wraps and rushed for the scene of excitement.

"Well, there's one thing's sure, someone had to give them tickets, so some girl knows!"

"Might give you the job of trailing them, Baby Stuart; you're good at detective work, you know," Mildred suggested as she finished putting on her shoes.

There were giggles from various quarters, but Margaret went on with her dressing, ignoring this remark. Her suspicions were now thoroughly aroused. Probably even the call was not a fraternity stunt but a trick of Mildred's to get the laugh on her. Margaret had entered into the affair heartily, remembering well Bob's initiation of a similar kind, but to be made the dupe of a practical joke for Mildred to crow over was quite another thing!

"Might not be safe to try your foot to the slipper, Topsy!" Katharine retorted for Margaret, causing the laugh to turn on Mildred.

"Don't be quite so sure of your game, Baby Stuart; you know you've been known to make mis-

takes before," Flossy said in low tones to Margaret. "I don't believe she would dare; she's already over-cut and is down in economics."

"Humph!" was all that Margaret offered in reply.

Some of the girls took the whole affair hilariously, thinking it a clever ruse, and only wishing that they had "been next" to have enjoyed it. Others were awed by its daring, and still others were thinking over the names of girls who they knew had many callers. The more thoughtful appreciated what it would mean and the scandal it would create at Ainsley. Whoever had done it had thought only of the fun, not once of the results.

"Well, it's up to the Senate now to prove what it can do. Some mighty poor sand in it, some very good. The guilty ones ought to be found out."

"Yes, but who'll tell? You can't get girls to do it! Boys would, but you know that even the proctors get themselves disliked for it."

Margaret heard this conversation as she stood in the hall below, among the excited knots of girls still lingering to discuss the great theme of the moment.

"Where's Topsy?" Polly asked, as Flossy, Katharine, and she joined Margaret.

"I saw her and Mella leave the dressing-room and start out soon after the commotion downstairs," Flossy replied.

"Gone to meet their lady-friends," Margaret suggested, laughing.

"Now, Kiddie, you've been known to jump without looking at your landing place," Katharine reminded.

"Really, I don't think there's a bit of evidence against Mildred. She loves to tease you, Baby Stuart, and I'd not give her quite such a target as you do for her broadsides," Polly added.

"Well, one thing's sure, our task will not be lightened by having her so constantly with Mella. I think it's too bad that more of us don't go about with her. You know Mildred can't resist trying experiments with the Princess' principles."

"You are right, Flossy, and I do honestly think, Polly, that you ought to use your charms there; you know Mella adores your tea-pouring, poor unsuspecting innocent!"

"You see, Puck my dear, how much depends on the thought held over a person. Now you always expect a scalding—"

"And get it!"

"Well, you ought not to be disappointed! Now Mella is ravished with my flourishes, and

provided I only do it, doesn't mind even a scalding."

"All the more am I convinced, my dear Polly, that you should exert your charms. I have no proof of bad effects thus far, but on general principles Mildred doesn't seem the best guide for Mella."

"I'm not so sure about Mella's innocence. *Juliet* has discovered much to me."

"Girls, I never knew any one so completely lost in a part in my life as she was in *Juliet*. Why, my sneeeze nearly upset her. Did you hear her scream? I had to grab her and make her come to."

"That's just it, Puck. She does give herself up so — any scheme she takes just like a play — never seems to think or question."

"That's my meaning. And Mildred doesn't care so long's she has the fun."

Just then three girls hurried around the corner of a side street. One of them, turning, waved to someone behind and then hurried on towards the hall. The pink opera cape told them at once who one of them was.

"There! Look up the street! There go those big girls — yes, they're nearly falling over themselves with laughter — hear it!"

"Girls, things do look dark for Topsy. I honestly didn't think it of her — and that's all my influence has counted for," Polly sighed.

"There's bound to be trouble. You know the dean won't let it drop, and Araminta and I are on the Senate, and we'll have to do our duty no matter on whom suspicion falls. I'm mighty sorry it rests upon our crowd."

"It does, Katharine, for several of the girls saw Mildred throw that little ball of paper. Of course, it might not have been anything, but I saw later one of the men lean over and pick it up. I'm sure they were Ned Baxter and that Fry man."

"I'm glad we're through this direful night. Such hair-breadth escapes! Where's Cinderella? How'd we happen to come off without her, poor, hard-worked slave! I'm glad I wasn't in her shoes; I'm afraid I should have prompted you long before she did, Baby Stuart. She deserves your pity. Probably she's home now grinding on that thesis," Flossy declared.

Margaret sighed. "I got angry; that was all that ailed me. I'm sure it was a trick, call and all." The girls laughed at this characteristic impulsiveness. Whatever faults she had Margaret was honest and open.

"Girls!"

"Why, Ethel, what's the matter?" in a chorus of surprise. "Where have you been?" They had just reached the room when Ethel entered excitedly.

"I knew Mildred was up to something thoughtless with Mella, so I just went with them — and I'm glad I did. I can't prove a thing, but we passed that same couple of big ladies — not a word; but when we got a block from them, Mildred turned and waved at someone. I wasn't going to let Mella get into trouble! I know just how Cinderella felt; Mildred didn't want me along a bit. I don't think that Mella suspected anything."

"Don't be quite so sure. Girls, there are some things to be done besides darning. If I undertake the rôle of guardian angel, I feel that I should be allowed to resume my embroidery at all meetings of the cabal."

"Polly, I think you'll need more than that to support your effort. If you succeed, I'll never again protest at a scalding."

"No, Kiddie," Katharine stated, several days later as she and Margaret were strolling along toward Ware Hall, "there's not enough proof, to my mind, that Mildred is guilty of this. I feel

sure she is, but her coquetting with it as she does is just the way she treats everything; it's not fair to report her on that."

"Well, I s'pose I do feel some spite about it, Katharine, but I've had cause. I'd never tell just for that, though, I know I wouldn't. I think the girls are right in feeling the way they do about the whole thing. It's mean to make the college such a butt of fun as the whole thing has, and if this is not noticed, more will do it."

"Sound, Kiddie, as ever when steam's normal. But how do you know that was a note she tossed? How do you know they were her friends? I've seen Mildred bluff like that to tease you. She knows how worked up you've been over the thought that you've been tricked by that call. Her very laugh riles you — I don't wonder, although I wish it didn't. Now, proofs are what we've got to have. If I suggest Topsy's name to the Senate, and Araminta feels the same, we're bound to protect her till she's proved guilty. Polly says she's on her guard now, and her manner might be taken two ways — her enjoyment in keeping us guessing, or guilt. You see, Kiddie, you've none of that coquetting tendency with problems; you make a head-on dash, hands up."

"Well, maybe you are right, Katharine; I do

honestly hope that you are." Poor Margaret's molehills were all mountains these days. She was down in two subjects, and very much discouraged generally. Yet all her friends knew the cause of this trouble was worry over the play and the pains she was taking to help Mella, and a bit too much time, perhaps, at basket ball. She could now easily make them up.

"Kiddie, smile at me! I'd flatten the mountains a bit," roguishly.

One afternoon, about a month after the play, Ethel came hurriedly into the room. Katharine and Polly were studying some French together. The moment the girls saw Ethel's face they knew something was wrong.

"How dare you look so burdened in the presence of the Bundle-lifter, Ethel?" Polly demanded, pulling some lace work out of her shirtwaist, a habit of hers when it looked like a session.

"Well, Polly, I am — very much! It really is serious; I'm sure you'll think so, this time, Katharine."

"My dear Cinderella, no one could fail to be impressed."

"Mella!" Polly sighed and lay back among the pillows, hands idle.

"Yes, she has just told me in the most innocent

way that she is going to dinner and the theater with Mildred and two men, to-night; and when I asked her if Miss Deering knew, she said in a most childlike way, 'Is it to break a rule? Why would Mildred take me? I want to go, I like the two men. I have been to two matinees — they are good fellows.' All I could say did not change her."

"Did she happen to mention the names of the brave knight-errants?"

"No. She said Mildred didn't think it best to — they've got to stay away from here till something, she wasn't clear what, blows over."

"Eh, ha! Light upon our path! Mella, thou art a good angel, but not to Mildred! 'Something blows over.' I see — most any one might," Polly commented dryly.

"But, girls, they start in an hour, and Mella ought not to start. Do you feel she ought?"

"She must not! Yet how to prevent?" Katharine began to put up her work, humming as if nothing had happened.

Polly, never long over-burdened with any care, began to work; Ethel waited Katharine's advice. Just then Margaret and Mildred entered, talking as gayly as if no difference had ever occurred between them. It was often Mildred's mood to

assume this, and Margaret was sometimes big enough to fall in with it.

"Girls, I'm consumed to see a play to-night. My treat — what's going that's best — any one got an objection?"

"None, my dear Puck. To what do you allude?" Araminta had brisked in in time to hear the last. "The theater! Oh, 'twill resurrect my feelings from the tomb!" holding out her pack of English-12 themes.

"Well, if you'd ever let a fellow get ready for your shots, Puck! I've a date and can't."

"A date! What, pray, may we construe that to be? An Ainsley girl an evening date! Of course, the dean must be in it!" Polly exclaimed.

"What's on that's good, Topsy? — oh, I forgot, the fund, you're not interested, of course," Katharine commented innocently.

Mildred named over several, leaving out the most interesting of them all. She had fallen into the trap. Katharine named the omitted play.

"Well, it's hie diddle, diddle to me!" but the tone was too obviously nonchalant.

"We'll decide on the discarded one; I always like to be on the contrary side," Katharine announced. "Here, we must have Flossy and

Mella. Baby Stuart, hie thee to her sky-parlor, and break the news to her. Ethel, get the night keys. Shall it be a box?" Mildred was plainly uneasy.

"Mella is going with me," she announced rather defiantly, "so you will have to dispense with her also."

"Now, look here, Topsy, you don't carry off the charge till you tell where you are taking her." Katharine smiled up at Mildred; but there was a peculiar curve in her back and neck that Mildred knew, so she laughed. "Miss Deering or the octet, that's the verdict, Topsy."

Mildred's eyes darkened, flashed, then narrowed. Katharine's laughing yet firm gaze never wavered. "And if I choose to carry her off?"

"Must be done over our dead bodies! We stand for justice." Araminta backed up against the door.

Mildred rose, laughed one of her defiant laughs, and bowing low before Araminta, cried, "'I would hie me hither — paddock's calling, I must be gone!'"

"Where, Topsy? No? Well, then alone — and no Mella."

"What can you do to prevent?"

"My plain duty. Report you to Miss Deer-

ing — and I'll do it — if you will be a goose," Katharine answered.

Mildred did know. She was at bay. "Well, Puck, I'm going to the theater!"

"With Carl Fry and Ned Baxter, the two stylishly dressed young ladies at the open-dramatics!"

Mildred turned so pale for a second that the girls were frightened. "Tossed them a note from the platform — would have met them after with Mella! No, Topsy, you're caught for fair. Your own career you're welcome to steer, but not that innocent, untaught child's — not while we are here to see her have fair play. You've got to confess this, too, before the Senate. Araminta and I are bound by our honor to report any such thing as you played on the club. Will you, or shall we?"

Mildred was still; only her eyes were speaking. Suddenly a gay, reckless laugh broke from her — "And you think I'm the joker! Play your best, dear mentors — I'm ready for your Senate! Your charge, sweet innocent, of course, I resign — Margaret, will you accept the vacant seat?"

"Mildred, my dear, 'To alter favor is to fear.' The play was a good one, but you've lost. Be a true sportsman." Araminta did not offer to let her out the door.

The plea was too much. "'Et tu, Brute!' Well," with a shrug and jesture, "I can see no harm — I did introduce two fellows at the play; — as to who they were, that wild horses won't draw from me! Now do your worst!" She folded her arms, stamped her feet and began a clog dance in true Southern fashion.

The girls laughed, they couldn't help it. Mildred was Mildred — game to the last.

As to the proposed party, Katharine, determined that Mella should not be disappointed, carried out the plan suggested. There were no signs of Mildred and her escort. Margaret alone was sure that she caught sight of a pink cape, between two men, getting into a taxicab after the play.

CHAPTER VII

PROVING SOME THINGS ABOUT GIRLS

THE Ainsley girls were gathered in the auditorium to decide upon a question most vital to all of them. The president of the student-body of administration had brought before them for their consideration and action the movement known as the "Honor System." This system, if adopted, required of each girl a pledge that every paper handed in at an examination would be completed with no aid from any one, and that she would report to the student-committee any person seen acting in violation of this pledge. No proctor or instructor was to be present at the examinations except for the purpose of explaining any point that needed clearing up.

When the president sat down there was an instant buzzing in every quarter.

"That means, if I see my best friend collecting facts, I must tell on her. Well, I guess I see myself."

"You wouldn't have one who would."

"Well, 'that's one of the things that no feller

can find out.'" Many around laughed at this clever application of *Lord Dundreary's* favorite makeshift.

"Well, I think it's a pretty poor showing for a lot of girls if they can't help people to be honest," Margaret declared, and it was plain that many of her classmates agreed with her.

Then Araminta stood up. "Madam Chairman, if any of this assembly would be bondswomen to the old system of proctors, 'Sphinx' and all, then her have we offended!" Laughter from the upper class girls greeted this allusion to the dreaded proctor of freshman days. "If any there be that demand why we rose against these proctors, this is our answer: Not that we loved the proctors less, but honor more. Had you rather all be slaves than that the proctors go and we write ourselves all free-women? As the long line of noble proctors did their duty by us, loved us, we weep for them; as they were valiant, we honor them; but as they put upon our honor the stain of suspicion, we would rid ourselves of them. There are tears for their labor of love, honor for their valor, but death for the effects. Who is so base as to be a suspect? If any, speak; for her have I offended. I pause for a reply."

"'None, Brutus, none!'" a dozen or more

cried. Many in the room were learning those very passages from "Julius Cæsar" which Araminta had so cleverly parodied.

"Then none have I offended. The question of their death warrant shall be enrolled in our annals, their good deeds praised. We have done no more to the proctors than the faculty shall do to us if we prove not true to our trust. Here comes *Mark Antony* with the proctors' death warrant, our pledge. You shall all receive the benefit of their dying, a place in the annals of this great and glorious college as the signers of this declaration of freedom."

The ushers at once began to distribute the pledges. As Araminta sat down, a storm of applause followed her. Her gifts in oratory were very great, and the degree to which her vocabulary was tinctured with Shakespeare's phrases, and which she always so aptly quoted, were greatly admired by those who knew her. Her many rôles upon the Dramatic Club stage had made her better known than almost any other girl in college. That she was not always known to use her gifts in such great undertakings caused the more surprise at this effort now. The effect was to turn the tide in favor of the measure. While the feeling was at its flood, Katharine asked that every girl place

her name at once upon the pledge. So the system was adopted before any reactionary movement could be started by the more thoughtless and irresponsible faction.

Finals were at last upon them. The new ruling had been the untiring topic of conversation in every group since the meeting two weeks before. Now it was to be tested. It must be admitted that the resolves of some of its signers did not bode success. On the faces of those who meant to stand by their pledges was stern resolve.

It had been tacitly agreed among some of the members of the octet that Margaret and Ethel should sit near Mella to protect her from any temptations in their History-10 test. At the last gathering of the octet when Mella was present, the subject naturally had been about the new rule. With malice-intent the girls had discussed with unremitting zeal its full obligation, hoping, as Flossy put it, that the meaning could be driven in. But they builded better than they knew.

Mildred came also to that protected corner of the examination room and took her place directly in front of Mella, a wicked twinkle in her eye.

"Now, Kiddie, don't fight for anything smaller than a real sizable chip!" Katharine had warned. She knew that Ethel would look before she leaped.

The instructor came in, with effort at faith in his manner, and distributed the papers; the dean walked in and out, but except for these the girls were left to themselves. The words of the pledge were on the blackboard instead of that time-worn paragraph against communication. There were conscious flutters in the air, a few nervous ripples; then all settled down. The first hour and a half had gone when Margaret, who had been completely lost in her own work, looked up suddenly. Mella was chewing her pencil, the other hand dangled innocently by her side next to the wall. Suddenly Margaret saw a finger come through the rounds of the back of Mildred's chair and a piece of paper was placed on her desk. She noted the troubled expression on Mella's face, then saw the fingers close over it.

Margaret was excited. Yet she must finish her own test. Fifteen minutes later she had answered the last question. To her surprise she saw Mella pinning the tiny note, before received, to her examination paper. If she kept her pledge, she must report what she had seen. To do this would be construed by Mildred and others to be spite. During the few moments left in which to run over her paper she came to her decision; she must send in to the student-committee the names of both Mil-

dred and Mella! Mella herself looked as if she were going to cry, and upon handing in her paper left abruptly before any one could speak to her. Margaret knew in her own heart that she had done right, but the act seemed like one of betrayal of two friends. All that evening depression was upon her, nor could Katharine's fun dispel it.

The student-committee met the next day and among the things to be taken up they found Mella's and Margaret's notes. One was written in a round, energetic hand with the simple statement of the act seen; the other made every member of the committee laugh. Pinned to the note was the slip of paper in a fantastic, dashing hand which read: "Hello, Princess, what's your temperature?" The other read: "I promised, so I send the paper; Mildred wrote it. Please excuse her; I feel she meant to help; but I did not open. The promise made me do this, as I heard them all explain. I am sorry. Mella Cosimo."

Katharine was on the committee. Up to this time she had not heard of the incident. Now she understood Mella's pathetic little exclamation the night of the examination, "I find things hard to match together." How little, after all, had they understood the struggle of this witching little

friend to see their standards from their point of view. No one of the girls had been able to put herself in Mella's place and help her to grasp theirs. Of one thing the committee was sure, that no wrong had been done by Mildred. If her object had been to bait Margaret, only cheer had been intended for Mella. At Katharine's suggestion, no notice was taken of the incident.

Some few nights later, to the surprise of Mildred and the others, Mella, who had not seemed herself for days, suddenly exclaimed, "Mildred, I feel I am not right to you as a friend. I wrote a note about your note to me in examination. I cannot make love and that fit, so I tell you I am all untrue. I cannot believe, girls, what you all told me to do was right."

For fully a minute nothing was said. No one had ever seen Mella in such a tense mood; no one had ever seen her eyes with such pain in them. Such a result of their moral lesson had never been foreseen. They felt like culprits and looked it. Not one knew what to say or do. Then the unexpected happened. Mildred was nearer tears than they had ever seen her. Suddenly, to the amazement of all, she went to Mella and putting her arms around her, said with a real tremble in her voice: "Princess, you are a trump! You've

made me sorry, and that's more than any one else can boast," with some of her old-time fling. "I didn't believe you had the stuff in you. I take my hat off to you."

Mella's face plainly showed how mystified she was by the incident. Then slowly, like the softest, mellowest beams of moonlight breaking through a cloud-rift upon a ripply lake, a smile came into her eyes and played uncertainly about her lips. "Then — then it wasn't to hurt you!"

She could have done anything with those girls. No one had anything much to say the rest of the evening, just mere commonplaces. Not often were these merry girls stirred in feeling as they had been to-night.

"Katharine, why can't I tell Mildred my mistake? I'd feel so much better," Margaret asked when they were alone.

"I wouldn't, Kiddie. Mella's Mella. You and Mildred are too different; Mildred loves to tease. If you only wouldn't unhook your armor so often and give her a chance. I think she's changed, though — a bit. It took pluck to say what she did to-night, lower her gay colors and show the good stuff there is inside the fort. You can't help liking Topsy." Even Katharine was under the spell of the evening's revelations.

CHAPTER VIII

THEY WOULD A-CAMPING GO

LOGGERHEAD POINT, June 10, 19—.

"*Dear Octets:*

"Everything is simply adorable here — I've even forgot to be lonesome! John, the sole man in the place, has just brought me Puck's letter with your addendums. I simply can't wait till you come! Think of it! All of us — just us, the unimpeachable we's, the 'Pie Alleyites'— I don't know any 'Fifth Avenue' people, you know — to be here in this heavenly spot for six weeks!

"Father has had the upper part of the boathouse made into a lounge for us, decorated in our class colors — I am still one of you. Baby Stuart, Ethel, and Topsy may have one window seat with their yellow; it goes all right with our shades. One of the boats has been gorgeously painted yellow, with green cushions, but the motor launch is in our colors,— we outnumber you, you see. There is a huge fireplace and many days we shall live out there over the water.

"Our camp is out on a bluff about a gunshot —

Puck's aim — from the big house in the woods, and simply perfect — logs rough, unhewn, inside and out; bunks of pine boards, hammocks, if you choose, a big fireplace. Our kitchen is simply darling!

"Mother says there's no need of you girls bringing any bedding; she has enough at the house for us. We're only a little way from the big house, and really very much to ourselves — just near enough to be properly looked after. Topsy may have to be chaperoned, but the rest will do, and, girls — don't let Topsy see this — there's a big camp down the lake, on the opposite side, which, they say, is to be taken by some Dartmouth fellows. If it is Ned's contraption, we'll leash our sporty member. Oh, hurry up and come; I can't wait! If you were going to stay for commencement, I'd come down; I'll have to next year if I'm not back. Mother is so much better that I may go back as a special — just hover round the edge of the learned academic atmosphere — grinding's not my long suit, you know.

"Think of the moonlight sails on the lake, the swims, the fun we'll have cooking, absolutely no shirking; two by two, week on, week off. Oh, it's going to be such fun! Do bring a lot of novels, and old magazines — the 'Ainsley Chatterer'—

and your theses for light reading! There's to be no company at the big house, so we'll be able to collect a few squares on them if our stews don't fill. Wish Mella could come; sorry she's got to go with those New York friends; am wild to see her! Can't she be spared a few days? Well, so long; Peter is calling to know something about the placing of the bunks. Oh, you dears! won't I be thrilled to the bone to see you!

"TEDDY BEAR."

The various statements as the letter progressed were greeted with wildest expressions of glee, and many and frequent were the interruptions in the course of Katharine's reading. This letter had been enclosed in one to her. The girls had been summoned in hot haste from the depths of their trunks, and had responded to the call in all kinds of costumes, snatching anything handy, to hear the eagerly awaited verdict on their summer plans. In three days they would be gone from the hall. Polly, as usual, going to New York to visit a cousin of her "Remnant," who had impressed the girls as a really whole man on his frequent visits to her during the year. Katharine's playful nickname, however, given him at the time of his operation, would always cling to him. Margaret,

Katharine, and Ethel were going for two weeks to be with Flossy at her summer home on Martha's Vineyard; Mella was going directly to her New York friends.

It was true that the girls had not wholly reformed the improvident tendencies of this friend, who had grown so dear to all. Margaret had resigned the shopping expeditions to Ethel, who had really done remarkably well in her gentle, tactful way: for one needs to know what it means to have the shoe pinch to be able delicately to make it set on feet not used to close fits. One lesson every one of these girls had learned,— how mistakenly they had sounded her. Every week discovered some new pocket of gold. What they had thought was lack of moral standard, had proved to be merely misapprehension of the customs and point of view, and often misunderstanding of her adopted tongue. Perhaps no one in the group had felt her first mistakes and regretted her tactics more than Mildred. Mella was so simple at times, always so tender and endearing, so interesting to watch, and so irresistible, that instead of breaking up the circle, their love for her had bound them all together in a tenderer, closer way than ever. Even in Mildred they noticed less of the fantastic devil-me-take attitude.

"Mildred's different with me, Katharine," Margaret had said when talking it over one day. "She's not so unapproachable; I feel she's franker." So much was Margaret impressed with this change that again there had sprung up between these one-time close friends the old intimacy. Nothing had been said; Mildred would have shied at any such admission of fault, and Margaret had learned some wisdom from past experience. She carried fewer chips around on her shoulders.

Now they were already on the eve of their Junior and Senior years.

"Oh, Mella, can't you come, too? Wouldn't a joint petition to your friends move their stony hearts, and grant you to us just half the time? Why, Princess, I shall become a degenerate again, after your and Ethel's grand success with my reformation, and if I backslide there's no telling how far down I'd go!" Mildred pleaded, snuggling up close to the dainty bundle of old-blue.

"Mildred, but how could I go; they've done so much, I feel to owe them much! But you could just a bit remember Mella, not to go too far down?" The smile and the questioning arch of the neck were enough to melt the hardest sinner.

"Princess, my confessor," kneeling before her,

"may I be ossified by the Senate, but I will remember thy injunctions!"

Mella winced; she always did under Mildred's effusions.

"Just a part of August! We'll all write them our most touching, heart-rending appeal to let you come. We really can't spare you all the time. Won't you let us?" Polly pleaded.

Mella shook her head quite decisively. "No! I will see first. I would not have you till I see — oh, but I would love to be there! And will you pour tea every afternoon in that lovely boat-house cozy, and can we sail by moonlight? I want not to be rude to those kind friends." Her eyes were full of far-off days, a yearning, inexpressible something within them the girls could never fathom. She had forgotten every one present in her dream, as she often did. Polly always objected to having any one break them. "I can see that lake now, Polly: I am sitting among those cushions — you would have them soft colors, wouldn't you? — looking out over the lake, and the moon is coming up."

"Oh, but that's too late for tea, Princess!" Flossy interpolated.

"No, no, it has to be that way. All ripples and sparkles, and fading away off into little silver

pathways. Once my mother, I feel, took me to a shore like that, and we stood there a long, long time. I was very tiny. I have never forgot," — stopping as if she had lost the train of thought. The smile was not for any of them, but for the dream. Mella had never before spoken of her mother; the dark mystery overhanging her childhood had been told them by Miss Deering. Once only to Katharine had she spoken of these feelings.

Then Flossy suddenly started up; she rarely was caught in sentimental dreams. Mella had come the nearest to tempting her into them of any person she had ever known. "Well, girls, I'm going to pack." The others soon followed. Was it Mella or the closing year; the fact that college life was half over for some and within a year of the end for others, that made this last gathering break up so quietly?

"Katharine, I'd like to know her life. There's a great mystery; she's felt things we girls never knew anything of. Sometimes she makes me feel just as if there were two of her," Ethel said very thoughtfully.

CHAPTER IX

WHERE ALL THE WOODS ARE GREEN

"Oh, girls!" It was Ethel's exclamation. She was standing on the bluff by the side of their camp. The surface of the big lake was rippled with a cool breeze, which was frolicking with the skirts and hair of the girls as they stood there near Ethel, as much enraptured as she, if the adjectives counted for fervor. Far shores nodded in deep green over the lapping waves; and on each side were woods, their soft shadows pushing out toward the other shore. Nothing was to be seen at first but woods and water dotted with tree-covered isles; then here and there, red roofs, green gables, and chimneys discovered themselves, amidst the foliage on shore and islands. Here on this bluff, twenty feet above the swash, swash of the water, was their log bungalow.

A broad porch, screened in, extended out over the water; on it were steamer chairs, willow couches, rockers, hammocks, a tiny table here, a pot of ferns there; a rack made of a fish-net upon the wall, full of magazines, song books,— in fact

everything that happened to need a resting place for the moment.

"Oh, such luxury! I shall sit here and embroider and let the strenuous ones do what they choose," Polly cried, sinking into one of the big pillowed chairs.

"No, you don't! Perfect discipline is to be maintained in this camp! No one is to do as she pleases all the time — exercise, work, reading for the improvement of our minds, long tramps, rowing stunts, regular swimming tasks, cooking, dishes, cleaning up camp must come in too!"

"Slave driver Puck, have mercy! Listen to those soft Lydian measures,— how can you!" Araminta sighed, sinking into another chair.

"You know, my dear children, we especially specified that no maids should enter our domains — now who, pray, will do the stunts if we do not?" Flossy protested.

"Who's to be captain this week? Oh, yes, Puck! But are we never, let me inquire, to be left to the felicitations of our own devices?" Araminta asked.

"Araminta and Mildred, you are down on my book as housemaids; Flossy, cook, assisted by Polly, barring the pouring of tea — that's forbidden!" Sighs of relief greeted this last. "Ethel

and Margaret are dishwashers, and I shall buy the food and wait at table. Every man makes his own bed, and keeps his own corner in order."

There was a large living-room with a great fireplace, in which a four-foot log could be burned. Adjoining this was a room lined with bunks still unmade, and three chiffoniers tucked in among them. Back of the living-room was the kitchen, with its neat array of new cooking utensils. At one end was a large table, near it a cupboard of dishes. The large veranda at the back was evidently intended for a dining-room. There were a table and several chairs at one end, a refrigerator at the other. At the back of the house was a stove that suggested that on hot days cooking could be done upon it.

Flossy and Katharine had already taken an inventory. For the night's meal there appeared to be plenty of material.

"Are the cooks to make out the menus?" Polly inquired. From her general air of indolence it might appear that her position of assistant was not impressing her deeply, nor could they discover that the chef was in any more promising mood.

"I'm going to get my bed made, and my side of the dresser settled," Margaret announced, taking a cooky from the bag on the table as she passed

it. This was a signal for the others, and soon a merry scene of bed-making was in progress. "Here, Puck, where's the slip for this pillow — none here — in the top or middle drawer, did you say; of which dresser, my dear? There are only four sets in the house!" Araminta grumbled.

"I think that the cooks ought to be set free from all encumbering worries," Flossy asserted, a pillow between her teeth. "Look at my assistant! Would you ever dream that she has a task upon her hands? I've ordered her to prepare the potatoes for baking. You can see how she's doing it."

"Would you like any assistance in rousing her?" Mildred asked, flopping a blanket into place. "I've unsettled the dignity of this moral company before."

"No, Topsy, she'd be maimed for the week if you should attack her. Please don't try," coaxingly.

"Not if you'll agree, Cinderella, to see to it that I'm held up to no moral schedule throughout the entire summer."

Just then a knock was heard at the back door. "Come!" Mildred cried.

"Why, Topsy! This isn't 'Fifth Avenue,' you poor social degenerate!" Teddy Bear cried,

going to the door, the others peering through any hidden aperture to get a sight of their first caller. "Oh, it's you, Peter!"

"Yes, Miss Theodosia." There were unmistakable giggles from the bedroom. This dignified name for their mate who had been known so long as Teddy Bear was too much. "The Missis is after wishing to know if you'd be wanting anything," a grin struggling through his dignity at the heads here and there visible. His hat was in his hand, and the wind was playing with his curly red hair. A grin wrinkled up his sunburned face at the cry from the porch, "Did anybody say feed?"

"Sh—sh!" was heard on every side.

"I haven't heard the gong; what's the matter?" drawled Polly, still oblivious of the caller.

"I didn't know but you'd be liking the fires kindled — to give you a start like." It was evident that Peter was struggling to hide his skepticism. His opinion of college girls' ability in such lines was not well grounded.

"No, Peter, we can do everything ourselves, thank you. Tell Mother not to forget to come down for the evening if she's able."

"That's it, Miss, she'll not be coming alone. Mr. Baring's just come, unexpected-like, and

would a call from them both be pleasant to the young ladies?" Peter was all seriousness now.

"Sure thing — delighted, Teddy," came from several.

"I'm obliged to you. I'll be telling them," bowing and waiting his young mistress' signal to leave. "You wouldn't be liking the kindling fetched for the grate, and the fire laid?"

"No, Peter, we'll manage that; if you see us being smoked out, appear."

"Yes, Miss." Peter was gone.

"Cinderella and I will get the fire started; it's chilly already," Teddy decided.

The beds were ready and the girls came out and began to wander around.

"Did you call, Flossy dear?" Polly asked, coming in from the porch. "Mine to lay the fire!"

"Whew! We'll be smoked herrings by the end of the week, if this is to be our fate when Polly builds the fire!" Katharine cried. "Now, do it this way, see — paper, kindling — no, no, not all straight — artistically, Polly — there — no, no wood yet — here, a match! Now it's all right."

"Puck, where did you learn the art?"

"If you had camped out as many times as I

have, you'd soon learn the difference between a fire and a smother. You could make your fortune at smothers nights in the open," Katharine replied.

The fires were blazing merrily in grate and stove, just giving the rooms the needed touch of homishness.

"Here, everybody turn out and bring in our night log; Peter's probably hanging round to see us prove ourselves in need of a man. You ought to have heard him smile when I told him he was to pile it outside in the shed," Teddy laughed.

Soon they had two birch logs beside the hearth ready for the fire. Meanwhile Flossy, covered by a huge apron, cookbook before her, was mixing something in a bowl. Polly was daintily picking potatoes from a basket with the tips of her fingers, and putting them into a pan. The process of washing them was still funnier. The girls were enjoying her discomfiture.

"Better use the tongs, Polly, and the brush-broom," Katharine taunted, brushing the bark from her dress. Polly darted towards her a disdainful glance and went on with her work.

"Just right for the tates, Polly," Flossy exclaimed, testing the oven.

"Yes, but these are not ready for it, my dear."

"How many pray do you think we'll consume? Two apiece is enough."

"I thought I'd get it over with for the week," continuing to pile them up as she washed them, "then I wouldn't have to dirty my fingers up again," holding the offending members out and viewing them with tragic horror.

Finally the potatoes were cleaned and placed in the oven. "Now what next?" with a comic sigh.

"Grease the gem irons!" mercilessly holding out a dish containing a rag soaked in butter.

"That! Touch that! Oh, Flossy! Well, if I must!" Then a bright idea struck her. Rushing to the cupboard she returned triumphantly with a long-handled fork. Spearing the offensive article she plunged the dripping rag into the muffin tins. But there were difficulties getting it into all parts, and in one of her flourishes the saucer clattered to the floor. Ethel jumped for another rag, but finding only a towel took that to sop up the grease; another rescued the fallen saucer. Flossy, dire despair in her face, gazed from the wreck to her assistant. Polly was calmly nursing her burned finger, unconcerned as usual over the effect of this flourish as over the tea that went

not cup-ward. Katharine enjoying it all, finished greasing the tins, and soon the biscuits were in the oven.

"Flossy, dear, what can I do to assist you now?" Polly beamed, coming from the bedroom, a rag covering the burn.

"Get the steak out from the ice chest."

"And land it on the floor," Mildred finished.

Polly obediently brought the meat. "Has to be pounded, doesn't it?" searching about for a cudgel-looking implement for the purpose.

"Are you feeling so spiteful as that towards the poor dumb thing?" Katharine teased, as she piled some wood into the stove. "More wood! That's the housemaid's job."

"Grandmother always used to pound hers. Has that also been abolished by modern cooking schools?" Polly asked, opening the steak dreamily with the offending fork of the greasing episode.

Flossy took the steak away, and then tested the potatoes. Meanwhile Polly was looking through the larder. Soon she exultantly produced a head of lettuce, a bag of nuts, and some oranges. All were interested.

"Here, Araminta, that's a dear, crack your fingers and incidentally a few nuts; Mildred and

Ethel, you know you want to peal and cut up these oranges into squares."

As the oranges were cut, Polly spooned out a few and placed them upon two or three lettuce leaves, carefully washed and dried. Over this she sprinkled the nuts, covering each portion with olive oil before placing it in the ice chest.

"But I had to, Puck," Polly exclaimed, "your fertile brains must concoct another dessert," as Katharine held before her the menu and pointed to the oranges. "Simply could not resist."

A search discovered to the tried caterer some fruit cake. "I have it, Polly, not a moment shall you rest from your labors. Whip up some cream; we'll steam up this and have that on it."

Flossy stood near the window looking over the menu, a comic look of despair in her face. The girls knew that solemn scratch of the ear. "The peas!"

"Oh, Flossy! Peter's adorable peas!" Teddy cried, coming from her work of setting the table. "He'll never forgive me; they're his first. He's tended them so faithfully to let us have them our first dinner."

"Come on, all hands, let's shell them. Can't we get them done?" Mildred cried, bringing out the basket.

"No, you'll have to go without. The spuds are in a popping state, biscuits perfect; steak must be cooked at once," was Flossy's damper to this proposal. It was greeted by groans from all.

Soon the delicious odor of broiling steak was adding to their already keen appetites. It was a hungry company that at last, after many excursions to cupboard and pantry for forgotten articles, sat down to enjoy this cosy meal of their first night in camp.

The dishwashers displaced the cooks and caterers, and the table was soon ready for breakfast. When the work was finished and the lights turned out, they gathered about the big fireplace. It was raining, so the porch was abandoned. Mr. and Mrs. Baring soon joined them, and renewed their college days, listening to their merry songs to the accompaniment of Katharine's guitar and Mildred's banjo.

CHAPTER X

THAT BUNCH OF BANANAS

FOUR weeks had taken to themselves wings and flown toward the senior-junior year of the octet. Only three weeks were left to them of this ideal summer. Nothing could have been chosen that would have been more fruitful of fun-provoking, helpful experiences to this group of girls than regulating their own affairs in camp.

"We don't have the inconvenience of having to look after the chaperon, and yet we are most properly chaperoned," Katharine remarked when they were getting into bed at ten-thirty, which, during these weeks had been their prescribed bedtime. "They're always such real objects of pity, and yet the delicacy of their position is such that one can't just express the feeling."

"Yes, and the best of it is, Mamma is so sure that we're capable of taking care of ourselves now, that she has no anxiety over us at all," Teddy added.

"No, the most disgruntled and fastidious Mrs. Grundy couldn't judiciously turn up her nose at

our position," continued Katharine. "Now just the training Polly's fingers are getting in touching dishes will be of such advantage to the Remnant the entire length of their sojourn together. Imagine, just for a moment, what his biscuits would have been that first night had the hour of trial been postponed till after their joyful union!"

Polly, curled up in her bunk, sighed as she counted over four burns and two stains on her usually immaculate fingers. "If he really gets a remnant himself, he may be grateful!" This had been her week as chief cook. She had served twice as understudy, once to Flossy and once to Katharine; each had been merciless in her exactions.

"He! Between mortal escapes from being made potpie of, fried in the pan, and baked in the oven, I remain to tell the story of my week of sub to Polly!" Araminta ejaculated, crawling into bed. "'Tis enough of a coming in for one senior."

"Speaking of seniors, girls, let's do something wild and thrilling to-morrow night to celebrate the Princess' arrival. She must not find us so prosaic. This life of the just will eat me up yet!"

"The just! Do you call that thrilling diving match in the middle of the lake, poor Peter eat-

ing his heart out for fear you and Margaret would never come up, the life of the just? Crawling out of bed in the dead of night and raising our hair on end with fear that Indians or robbers were breaking into our cabin, call you that tame, Miss Topsy? Well, if you do, may I not be here to experience your hilarious moods!" Flossy denounced, tossing her long black hair over her face to comb it out.

"Why, Topsy, I think your gardening sprees with Peter are almost romantic. Such excitement as you give him with that hoe! I know he has to replant half the beds after you have been assisting him," Ethel added.

"Oh — What! — why, Topsy!" came from two smothered voices. It was not to be resisted, — Flossy's hair-bedraped face toward the cots; Mildred had tipped her bodily, head-on into the reposeful Araminta. The impact and the resistance brought bedclothes and girls, Mildred teetering on top, to the floor.

"'Tis not enough, that after a day of direful domestic tragedies,— burned potato chips, spilled boiling lard, biscuits dejected and inanimate, but I must thus be ejected from my virtuous couch! This, this is the simple life!" Only Araminta's face and hands were exposed; her eyes were rolled

in tragic pathos toward the ceiling, nor was she in any way trying to extricate herself from the tangle.

Katharine and Teddy sprang to her assistance, and with the aid of the others, lifted their abused sub-chef to her deserted couch, and laying her in a limp heap, began to straighten out the bedclothes. Mildred was dancing Ethel about the big living-room, singing negro songs at the top of her lungs. Soon leaving her partner, she began some of her gayest negro folk-dances, snapping her fingers and throwing herself about in the most captivating manner. The girls could not resist it, and soon the guitar and banjo came out; Araminta, her woes forgotten, stepped off a cake-walk with Polly in their phantom costumes. For the simple life the hour was late when they settled down; for as their spirits cooled they curled up in front of the grate fire and talked as only girls can. Before retiring it had been decided to go for a moonlight trip upon the lake to celebrate Mella's arrival.

They had, with some few noted variations, lived up to their daily schedule: breakfast at eight-thirty; cleaning up of cottage directly after morning swim; hanging up of bathing dresses; do-as-you-please hour; dinner (except when picnics are

planned) at one; feelings being unanimous and weather permitting, boating or tramps in the woods, or afternoon of reading in lounge, or siesta on the porch; tea at five; high tea at seven-thirty; do-as-you-please evening; turn in at ten-thirty. Often Peter was inveigled into taking them for long trips in the launch. That he enjoyed it was evinced by the appreciative fun in his blue eyes, deep under his rusty red eyebrows.

Mildred was his especial delight. Her antics were an untiring source of enjoyment to him; Katharine could always get him to talk. Her ready tact in making him feel at ease was the talisman. Katharine possessed the secret of putting herself in the other fellow's place and seeing things from his view-point. It was what Araminta called her "Lincolnsonian stunt."

Four o'clock brought Mella. There was the same indescribable charm of personality, from the soft brown hat with lavender bows, down the lines of her tan traveling suit to the tiny bronze feet. The eyes were as impenetrably brilliant as ever, and grew more so as she stepped into the big lounge over the boathouse, where Polly sat pouring tea behind the dainty tea-table in the big bow window overlooking the water.

"Oh, Polly! To have you pouring tea in it!

"I'LL WAGER MY SPRING HAT IT IS A FRATERNITY STUNT."

Oh, my lake! The pretty color — it's not to tell how I feel," after a long pause.

They had arranged it all as she had dreamed it out before she left in June. The gold-edged cup was in her hands, which Polly had brought up for her special delight. The girls were about her, unable to keep far from her. Mella chatted on, broken by long moments when she was utterly lost to them; then suddenly coming back to them with that smile and sigh which they all found so irresistible, she would listen to their story of the five weeks of camp life, or give them bits of her vacation. She had missed them, of that they were sure; and the beam on her face, spreading so infectiously over their own, told her how welcome she was. Her raptures knew no bounds over the proposed excursion up the lake, with a real corn roast at the end.

It was about six when the last bundle had been stowed away, and the girls, warmly wrapped, snuggled into the little launch, with Peter at the helm. The only drawback was a line of dark clouds in the south, along close to the horizon. Peter, importuned for comfort, had said wisely, "There was no dependin' on them lakes; 'twas likely to be fair, and then again 'twasn't; but the only way ye'd be sure was to go."

The camp of Dartmouth men across the lake had not so far shown any signs of life. Peter had several times taken them past it. To-night Katharine and Teddy had planned to picnic on the extreme point opposite the camp. Peter took them south first to give Mella a taste of the lake; then skirted along into the shadows of the farther shore, giving her peeps of the camps here and there as they slowly putted along. To their astonishment Mella was not satisfied. The artificial manner of gliding through the water seemed to jar upon her sense of the fitness of things.

"The lap of the oars — it is to feel the music!" she had exclaimed when nearly half way to the camping place.

"Mella, you shall hear them this very night," Mildred promised.

As they passed the Dartmouth camp, to their surprise, Peter ran in very close to the shore. No sign of occupation was at first apparent. Then suddenly Katharine exclaimed, "Peter, do you grow bananas here? Look at that bunch hanging on that tree!" Sure enough, there it was. No one was in sight, and otherwise the camp looked deserted. "Pretty good for a finish to our feast, eh?"

Then Peter sped across the little inlet of the

lake to the bluff, a half mile off. Although the lake was very narrow here, there were little lagoons leading to the other lakes.

Soon all was bustle and fun; Peter and the girls working for dear life to get the eatables up the inclined path. Peter quickly started a fire, and Katharine and Teddy put the potatoes into the hot ashes to bake. The ears of corn were placed in their husks upon sharp sticks and held in the fire to roast, but very frequently withdrawn by the eager cooks to be tested. Peter made the coffee in the big camp coffee pot, while two other girls were detailed to set the paper plates and necessary eating utensils on the rock table on the point of the bluff.

"Where are Mella and Mildred?" Polly suddenly cried, stopping in the midst of her work of placing the roasted corn on the big basket cover, which she had garnished with leaves. All had been so busy since the corn roasting began that in the flickering light the absence of the two girls had not been noticed. A hurried trip down the path to the boat, excited trills from the bluff, halloos into the surrounding deeps of the woods failed to discover them; only the echoes of their own voices were wafted to them from the shadows of woods and glooming lake.

"Some of Mildred's antics! She's perhaps giving Mella that boat ride with the music of the lapping oars, in the old boat at the landing," Flossy suggested.

Soon everything was ready, and the girls were impatient to begin, so they sat down. Peter suggested, much too smilingly, the girls thought, "That they'd be landin' pert-like when victuals called." Oh, that corn, fragrant with the husk; those potatoes crisp from the ashes; that coffee, the odor of which, ascending to the moon-kissed leaves, was enough to entice back the spirits of the old Druids slumbering in this old temple; the sandwiches with dainty lettuce leaves crisp within, olives, cold chicken!

"Yum, yum! To the victor belong the spoils! Here, Katharine, is the dessert you asked for."

There was Mildred holding aloft with Mella's help, that bunch of bananas. Mella's eyes were dancing with fun.

"You young pirates! You don't mean —"

"Yes—um! Here, I want an ear of corn! Oh, my buttons, but I'm hungry — don't wonder pirates were cannibals! Yum, yum, isn't this bully,— in the immortal words of T. R."

The girls could do nothing but laugh. Who could resist Mildred's spirits?

"To hear thy wish, Puck, is to obey."

"They really had no owners, we could see none, Polly," Mella hastened to defend this appreciative friend who had given her such a treat on that moonlit lake. To be sure, Mella would have liked it to be less rapid, and the sudden raid was a bit too sudden and exciting for an ideal dreamy time, but it had all been romantic and beautiful, so nothing had jarred. She could not conceal her radiant enjoyment of it all.

"Stealing! why, Mella, my child," with a discarding flourish, "'twas a moonlight raid, fair warning having been given the garrison."

Mella laughed one of her gurgling laughs. "Oh, girls, it was so funny — like an Indian chief's boast! Mildred standing up there on that shore all alone, waving her hands, the moonlight all about her, the water just lapping the shore. And then crying out, 'Is there anybody here lays claim to this fruit?' she waits. Then she starts toward the boat with that load. I tried to help her all I could. I pulled the boat to the shore — oh, it was so like a fairy story!" The girls were so fascinated by Mella's picture of the scene that Peter was much distressed lest the coffee be neglected.

"I'm sure, Peter, you were grand high mogul

to Mohammed once, you make coffee with such an aroma."

" Maylike, Miss; it's good if yez put me there," with a grin on his face.

" Peter, don't let Topsy be making a heathen of you. We'll see that St. Peter puts you on the incense corps when you go up."

" Peter, you know I'm your best friend. You'd expire up here but for me. I give you your only real recreation." Peter was shaking so he could hardly hold his coffee pot, and the great wrinkles from his eyes and mouth were spreading like the overflow-streams from a river over some sun-baked meadow.

The bananas were good, sweeter than any grown on home fruit stands, they all declared. When all were satisfied, Katharine insisted upon their carefully hanging up the fruit in plain sight of the camp, with a note of thanks. Every girl helped pen it, taking turns with the words till the verse had been carefully composed. Then it was secured to the bunch. If the owners were near, they could but be interested in that group of piquant faces close to the firelight, composing with mirth uncontrollable their lines:

'Twas only a bunch of bananas,
Only a yellow mess;

But the reason 'twas so luscious
Because, shall we confess?
All stolen fruit's so precious!
May you enjoy the rest!

As they finished securing the bunch to a low tree, an ominous rumble startled every one. Peter already had collected many of the things and stowed them in the launch. No sudden wind among dry leaves ever scattered more quickly those memories of a bygone season than did that clap the girls. None of them relished a storm out on the lake, four miles from camp. They had already had a taste of the storms of the region.

A glance upon the lake showed them that a heavy mist was already shutting down. Peter's face was anxious. So absorbed had he been with their fun that he had not noticed the approaching weather. When they reached the boat with the last articles, Peter, having already put out the fire, had the engine throbbing away in good earnest, as if eager to be off. It was already impossible to see three feet from them. Peter was laconically scratching his head and gazing out from the stern. Teddy was close to him.

"I'm not afther likin' it. The blame on meself! This blatherin' lake. It's no decent spot

for a Christian batch of pretty girls this ongodly night."

"Had we better try it, Peter? Couldn't we go back by the path?" Teddy asked.

"Ye'd be lost babes in the wood, and shure. Na, na — be aisy; we'll come up soon — the moon's like to come out."

Girls' spirits of the height of this company required more than a mist to dampen them. Margaret, Katharine, and Mildred had no fears, and the others soon responded to their cheer. Soon their voices were piercing the fog in rollicking song. The boat was pushing its way through the roughing water, throwing the spray over one and another. What rumbling there was came from a distance.

Suddenly a swishing, scraping sound quieted every one. The boat began to slow down — they were among the lily-pads.

"Why, Peter! We must have headed wrong; we're in the inlet."

"You never said a truer spache, Miss. And I'm afther thinkin' we're grounded." His worst fears were realized. He dared not risk disabling the engine by attempting to back out of that condition.

Taking the oars from their places, Peter leaned

far over and sounded. Then he began to push, Katharine and Margaret following his example with the other oar. The boat felt the effect and rolled a bit. Feeling cautiously about the prow, Peter began to climb over.

"Here, Peter, our only hope, do tie this rope to your waist!" Katharine cried, handing him the rope at her feet.

Peter obeyed with a benevolent grin, and getting his feet on a mud knoll he began slowly to push the boat, the girls helping all they could with the oars. Soon it gave a sudden slush into the water and was afloat. Peter leaped in, giving it a still farther start back. Now if the fog would only lift enough to let them see their way.

"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest—
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!
Drink and the devil had done for the rest—
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!"

rang out in clear male voices, very near.

"Ship ahoy! Lend us a hand; where are we?" Peter cried.

"There's your pirate crew now, Topsy," Margaret whispered.

"The bananas! Our doom is sealed!" Araminta gasped.

The steady splash of oars was plainly heard

nearing. Then into the light a boatload of men in slouch hats came.

"Give us your painter, old sport — we'll tow you out." Then singing at the top of their lungs Stevenson's famous song of Captain Flint, they slowly pulled them into open water. The girls were in stifled convulsions of laughter, and even Peter seemed to be enjoying the situation.

"There you are — now straight ahead in open water, keep to your port side," the leader directed in a muffled voice. Sounds of laughter came across the water through the fog, as the boat left them. The girls had kept well crouched over, hiding their faces while the men were within their light, and now could restrain themselves no longer.

Peter started the engine. It gasped, plunged forward, then stopped. After a long nursing it began again, intermittently. Soon, however, it seemed to revive and they were merrily forging ahead. The rescuers had vanished into the darkness. Now and then they heard distant bursts of song, but this after a time died away. The fog had lifted somewhat, and soon the light from the boathouse glimmered feebly out to them; it was a welcome sight.

Mr. and Mrs. Baring were on the landing to

meet them. They had been planning for their rescue. Hot cocoa and wafers were waiting for them at the big house, and the girls made no demur at this innovation.

CHAPTER XI

"THE MURMURING PINES AND THE HEMLOCKS"

THE girls had really flattered themselves that they were a trifle above the average in swimming, but, when Mella came, all mention of former prowess was noticeably absent from their conversation.

"I firmly believe you were a mermaid, Mella dear," Katharine laughed one morning, as that young lady stood before her on the sandy beach, still dripping from an early plunge in the clear waters of the lake.

"I could believe it, Kathreno, I feel so at home there. This lake — I hear things when I'm near it," including all,— lake, sky, woods, in her glance.

"That's alarming, Princess. Some of these days we'll miss you. You'll have vanished as completely as the pirates have, camp, bananas,— all. Please, don't! We couldn't go back to college without you." Mella instantly beamed up into Katharine's face, pressed the hand that had

taken hers, and hurried away to change for breakfast.

In fact, so much had they realized what it would mean to go back to college without this friend, that, through the assistance of Katharine's, Margaret's, Teddy's, and Mildred's fathers, the friends in New York had been able to complete a fund that assured her return for another year. No one had been more active in this effort than Mildred.

There were only two more days left before breaking camp. Katharine and Teddy were going with Margaret to join her people at their summer home in Maine; Mildred was going to take Mella for a cruise with her father and Ned, along the coast of New England; Ethel was going to her uncle's home in New York State. She had maintained a satisfactory degree of scholarship, and now he was to help her through the next two years. Flossy and Polly were to visit friends.

In three weeks they would all be back in old Ware,— all but Teddy. The last night of their camp they were to spend on an island, far up among the rushes and lilies, in one of the upper lakes. Peter and his wife were to spend the night in the open with them. At the head of the lake

the launch was to be abandoned for canoes. They were greatly excited over this anticipated lark.

" A real exploring tour up those winding inlets! Oh, Katharine, I've never been on a real one before — and in canoes, too! " Ethel's face reflected Mella's rapture, only that Mella seemed like one come back to her native haunts. She would sit two hours at a time on a favorite shady bluff, gazing out into the water. Once or twice Mildred declared that she saw tears sparkle through the smile always ready for the girls when they interrupted these quiet times.

" Girls, I'm subdued at times under their spell," Mildred announced.

" The most convincing proof of what you think you see of mystery in your charmer, Topsy." Mella seemed to possess the gift of bringing out the tenderest and deepest in each of the girls; yet, save for little flashes, she rarely, even vaguely, alluded to herself.

As the girls stepped from the launch to the beach near the banana scene and began to transfer themselves and the necessities for this night's outing to the canoes, Peter's watch indicated ten o'clock. He had informed them that the destination was an all-day's paddle from the head of the lake. Often as they progressed from one pond

to another, they lost sight of Peter, so blind were the canals. They lingered or paddled rapidly as the mood seized them. Lone herns were caught napping, or stretching forth the resting leg, would fly to the top of a tree, uttering their wild cries. Sand hens scuttled off across the thick lily pads; solemn-eyed frogs blinked and sunned themselves, thinking it not worth while to leap to cover; informed by Peter, possibly, that these were college girls from Massachusetts, where vivisection isn't done in the open. At any rate, they didn't budge. The shores were thick with tamaracks, and rushes marched all in among the lily pads as oddly as that famous army sprung from dragons' teeth. The very remoteness from the work-a-day world, the soft twitter of birds, the sudden wild calls, the unfamiliar noises, the "oilily bubbling meres," the sudden flights of herns and cranes,— all seemed to hush their spirits into harmony with the surroundings. Even Mildred, who was paddling for Polly, seemed to dream her way along.

Katharine and Mella were some distance ahead of the others, and at Mella's request she had turned into a quiet little inlet close under the shore, for the pure love of seeing where it would come out. Mella sat in the bow, her dark hair rippling

in the sunlight, her hand trailing a lily in the water, utterly lost, most of the time, with the beauty of it all. Katharine had stopped paddling in a darkly shaded pool.

"Kathreno, once — once I did this; I can't tell where. There are memories when I get in such places,— it's always my mother with me. You know, I — never have known who my parents are; but since I came here, I almost remember things; then — then they all go away."

Katharine did not speak for some moments; she saw that Mella was struggling to keep down her feelings, usually well suppressed. "I've known you felt things, Mella dear; you'll some day get it straightened out, too."

"Yes, you've always known. You did when I was so lonesome at college; you understand when I'm feeling them, then I always want you to know; but — it's to tell you. I can't find just how." The eyes lifted to Katharine's were not veiled, the deeps of pain were there; yet the smile struggled into them again as they met Katharine's assuring hopefulness and tender sympathy.

Yet even to Katharine's discerning eyes this was a revelation of what had been only half guessed at. When she took up her paddle again after a long silence, Katharine felt as if she had

waked from a dream. What a lonely, lonely little heart had been hiding under that charm of manner! And some of them had even thought her a butterfly!

"Where have you been? We've hailed Peter and hunted under the lily pads for you. What have you been discovering?" Polly chided, really troubled for them.

"Several continents and a lonely isle," Katharine replied enigmatically. Teddy glanced from face to face of the two girls and read what no one else did in the reply. Mella was herself again, and demanded the paddle.

"Mermaids don't know how to paddle, Princess," Katharine protested.

"They often make canoes of the lily pads and with leaves for paddles wander in just such haunts. I remember doing it; let me show you."

"Vanquished! Girls, I've a rival." Sure enough, not a girl among them could do it so skillfully, and certainly not half so "adorably."

Their canoeing match was soon interrupted by an halloo from Peter. Emerging from an unusually long avenue of rushes, they saw just ahead of them an island, upon which Peter had already a good fire started. Katy was busy getting things ready for lunch. It was a hungry company

that gathered around the fire, and glad enough to stretch themselves, after their long paddle.

"Oh, girls! That awful snake!" Polly screamed. All but Teddy, Margaret, and Katharine leaped to their feet. They ate calmly on.

Peter rushed to the rescue, stone in hand, from his resting place on a knoll back of them. Margaret was on her feet at once.

"Please, Peter, don't kill it; it's only a harmless water snake," stepping between Peter and his victim, scurrying off.

"What nonsense! Margaret, that's their curse, my dear," drawled Araminta, rather enjoying the dramatic turn things had taken. "Don't stop the car of destiny. Peter, carry out their doom!"

Peter, grinning, started to obey; but Margaret, too quick for him, stepped between him and the snake, and lifting it with a stick which she had picked up, tossed it into the water.

"There!" triumphantly turning on the laughing girls. "There's no need of killing everything just because its ugly or squirmy. They have just as much right to live as you have." Margaret seated herself and went calmly to eating, the other girls following her example.

"Now, Baby Stuart, I call that sentiment. I'm

sure I've no desire to meet them in my rambles," Flossy remonstrated.

The rest of the girls were laughing good-humoredly. They were used to Margaret's rescues, and secretly admired her courage. Even caterpillars had often been rescued from the walks, and put in safe places. No amount of joking could prevent her from looking out for a creature in need. In time they had even fallen into line, and she had seen Flossy reprove a teamster for beating his horse. Peter, with a grin and shrug, had gone back to his interrupted meal. What could any one make out of such things?

Mella reached over, as Margaret seated herself, and touching her arm said, "I was wondering what he'd done to be killed."

"If the Princess is converted, there's no hope. Bob, thy spirit is active yet!" Mildred exclaimed wickedly, smiling over at Margaret, to whom Katharine was feeding a sandwich. Margaret was enjoying her hard-earned satisfaction, and cared not a pin what was said.

The girls changed partners to finish the trip. The afternoon stretch was clearer sailing; for the stream had broadened, and when their haven came in sight, they were in another lake with deeply wooded banks. The island reminded them of

"Ellen's Isle," and Margaret and Mella were certain that any wild orgie might have taken place there. There was much to do to pitch camp: pine boughs must be gathered, and fuel for the camp fire. The girls had given Peter full instructions that all work of getting camp ready must be theirs. So he gravely set about giving them directions. The boughs had to be just such a size, and laid in a certain way to make a comfortable bed. Pine needles were gathered and strewn over these. Now all was ready for the laying of the fire at their feet. The ground chosen was a gentle slope so that the wind would not blow too coolly upon them, for the August nights were almost cold. They had brought blankets, but no other bedding. They were to sleep in genuine campers' style, lie down and roll up before the fire on the sweet pine boughs.

The island had been carefully reconnoitered to see that no foe lurked upon it. Nor was this a difficult task, for it was not a quarter of a mile square. The shore was a half-mile distant on both sides, and looked, as Margaret imagined, like the "silver strand" where *James Fitz James* met *Ellen*. Everything about it was just to the taste of these adventure-loving maidens.

Katy took charge of the dinner, and soon had

a camp meal that any mortal might have been satisfied with. Peter had gathered pine boughs for seats, and arranged them temptingly against trees and logs, near the fire on the bluff, and had succeeded in hanging the coffee pot upon an improvised crane over the fire. The sparks from the great fire chased each other like canny imps into the dark pines, and sparkled out into the gathering gloom of the lake. Night birds answered each other in distant tree tops; now and then there was a rustle in the bushes near by or a splash into the water,— all giving enough suspense to spice the occasion. A persistent owl very loudly hooted; they declared it was from the distant shore. Peter gave it a good deal of attention, off and on. They told stories, sang songs, and were genuinely thrilled by a story of inland adventure from Mella.

"I feel the approach of some uncanny force through the wind and air!" Araminta cried, rising and peering witch-like into the darkness. Then obeying her beck, they stole to her side and began hand-in-hand to circle the fire, repeating the witches' song from "Macbeth."

At last their spirits subsided and they began to settle themselves for the night.

"Ouch! Oh! and 'this is the forest of Ar-

den!'" from Araminta as she struggled to be comfortable on her pine-bough bed. Sympathetic giggles and groans told of similar struggles.

"Did any one speak of the joys of the simple life? Cot-beds are simple enough for me hereafter," Flossy groaned, just as all had become accustomed to the first pangs of the twigs.

Soon Polly was seen in the dim light to meander toward the fire. "From the frying pan into the fire?" Katharine queried.

A sigh was her only answer. Wrapped in her blanket, she curled herself up near the fire, regardless of sparks. Mella soon joined her, but seated herself in Indian fashion, resting her head upon her hand. Mildred was on her knees pounding the largest knots down to less acute angles, humming softly to herself Captain Flint's song. Katharine, Teddy, and Margaret seemed to be the only comfortable persons in the company. They had settled for the night.

Suddenly Katharine sat up, her head upon her hand, and listened. Mella had turned her head attentively also. "Teddy," very softly, "I hear oars!"

"Peter says there's not a camp on this lake, and no house for two miles. Yes, you're right," sitting up. Mella crawled over to them. Mil-

dred was settled quietly, and the rest seemed to be asleep.

"It's that owl, Kathreno."

"It's not an owl, it's — it's the same noise Mildred makes." Margaret had roused and joined the whispering group.

"Guess we'd better get down and pretend we're sleeping," Teddy suggested.

Soon they heard men's voices in whispered conversation just below them. Then suddenly, in softened tones through that hushed, leafy stillness came "Emmett's Lullaby," sung by a chorus of trained male voices. The girls were all awake now, and drew together in a close group around Katharine and Teddy. The first song was followed by others, closing with Tennyson's beautiful lyric, "Sweet and Low," in the softest hush-a-by tones, accompanied by guitars. Nothing could have been more ideal as a closing scene to their summer's outing: the whispering leaves overhead, the lapping water at their feet, the great bed of dying embers, the spicy pine atmosphere, and the nine girls bound together by ties of association unlike any other in the world. They knew these memories would linger and snuggle into their hearts, and keep them big and trustful.

"Isn't it beautiful!" Ethel whispered.

Mella was lost to all. She had partly risen and was leaning against Katharine's knee, her hands clasped around her own. "They are such lovely pirates, don't you think?" as if talking to herself.

"I'm sure they are our rescuers of the other night, and we have to thank you for this treat; own up now, Topsy."

"Well, if you are so cock sure, Margaret, why do you ask me?" Mildred retorted, with one of her knowing smiles.

"Who cares who's responsible! This is the balm to our hurt frames, or I don't know any. I'm soothed and calmed and feel like repose," Araminta sighed.

"There! That's the proof," Margaret exclaimed as upon the still night air broke the old pirate song, from far down the lake. The voices at last died away, and the girls knew that they would be left unmolested to repose. Even the twigs seemed less hard, and the music, mingled with the moaning of the pines, followed them into their dreams.

CHAPTER XII

THE OLD STORY WITH A NEW ENDING

THE last meal had been eaten, the dishes washed and put away, and the bedding folded and piled for Peter to carry up to the big house. Mella had taken her last lingering look at the soft rippling lake in its setting of trees; good-bys had been said. With no sense of anxiety as to Mildred's influence over Mella, the others had seen them go away together. Now, Teddy, Katharine, and Margaret were northward speeding towards friends and loved ones.

"Pegsie!"

"Bob!" The others had been greeted by Bob, and had started toward the waiting automobile before Margaret had given way to her feelings. She was with her beloved brother again.

Bob was in his most bubbling mood. He almost danced Margaret over the ground after the two girls. They were so happy to be together.

"I know something you can't guess!"

"Don't want to know, you old Bobbie, you!

I've enough to think about in having you, so there! It's better even than camping —"

"No, not than pirates and serenades by stewpan fellows. Before I'd be so disrespectable, Miss Pegsie."

"Well, he has a voice, Bob, and lovely eyes, so you better watch out."

"Booh! I'm panged with jealousy," pinching her arm and almost carrying her along to catch up with the girls.

"How are the bananas, young ladies?"

"The kind that grow in New Hampshire, Mr. Bob, are unsurpassed in my experience for lasting flavor — the more of them the merrier."

"Yes, so I understand; even to extending over a space of two weeks and trailing up the creek from lake to lake. I warn you, you've not heard the last of bananas; you'll be trailed."

"I'd like it,— rather bright, don't you think — the serenade?"

"Well, Miss Bird, it depends on how you define the word — as applied to scenery rather dark, and to deeds, piratical."

"You level at my meaning beautifully, Mr. Bob; it's such a pleasure to be understood." They were at their old sparring. It always went on when they met.

"As I told you when you were in K. C. last winter, I've always yearned for it." He had taken his seat with Katharine and they were speeding along towards home. This big, stalwart fellow with fun-dancing eyes did not look the part of "yearning" for anything.

"Oh, Dad! you old darling!" and Margaret was in the arms of the large, brown-eyed man, in many ways the older pattern of her brother.

"My Margaret's Katharine and her Teddy," and the warm embrace from the little mother — little beside her two big boys — for "boys" they were in their frank, open geniality,— all made the girls feel that same welcome they had felt on their visit to the Winters' home during the holidays.

Then, scrambling out of the house like young cubs, came Ralph, very mannish in his first trousers, and Ted just at the age when boys feel their hands and feet. Behind them both was Rachel, in spindling girlhood, just rounding into womanhood. Harold was out deep-sea fishing for the day with Kent, the old sailor.

"Almost a junior, my little Madge! and next year no home at Christmas. Some of those —"

"Now, Dad, don't say it. You know you love the poor things just as well as I do. Katharine

says we're to give them a Christmas party at her settlement club. She was down there, you know, some last year, and I'm going to try to help this year."

"Well, Katharine, how's the latest child of your adoption? — you see I know your phrases — we sometimes hear about things," looking down tenderly on Margaret, cuddled up under his arm. They were soon within the great front hall, and very much at home.

The evening passed in merry tales of the summer's experiences, and much talk about Mella. Ralph took possession of Katharine's lap and spent much of his time illustrating to her the charm of pockets, and showing her where she could have them, too, much to Bob's amusement.

When all had gone to their rooms, Bob knocked softly at his sister's door, and took his old place on the foot of her bed. They talked far toward the wee small hours.

"Bob, oh, Bob! You don't mean you really are?"

"Yes, Pegsie, for fair. I'm going to have my dream. Father's a brick about letting me go — wants me to. Think of it, you little trump, together, or almost, for a year at college! Think of the drubbing that Fry man will get if he dares

call again — of course it's Mildred who let him on to the tricks. Probably at the bottom of the banana stunt, too. So you're going to dabble in settlement work — slum it? Don't do it the way most of them do, I'd take hold right. I'll join you and give you some lessons,"— laughing, "use it as a 'lab' for the social study I'm going to take — half the men do it for that purpose; good stunt, too. Gives the poor devils a few frills and a fellow a chance to work out his theories. Katharine's a senior this year, isn't she? Doesn't pall on you yet, with her lack of sparkle, eh? I'm so full of Harvard, I can't wait for fall to come. The old fellows won't be there, and I'll miss them, but I'll bone all the more. Didn't wear the edges of the books much the first year. Think of the sprees we'll have together!"

"Bob, I don't believe it yet. I've said so many times to Katharine and Ethel that if Bob could be here I'd ask nothing else to just make things perfect, and now it's come true."

"That's one thing we've not done together, Pegsie, pull the sheepskin. Will you be through in two years more? My! doesn't seem a minute since you were chasing back the dewdrops 'cause you'd got to leave home. That Teddy's a nice girl — thinks Katharine made the pine trees and

put the needles on, doesn't she? That's what you girls call a crush, isn't it?"

"No, Bob, how ignorant you are! A crush is more the way Mildred feels toward Mella."

"Oh, Miss Pegsie, so happy to be enlightened! I'll soon be wise by association with such profound volumes of wisdom."

"Now, Bobbie, don't be foolish, I've so many serious things to talk over. You never wrote fully how you felt about that fraternity stunt. Did you like it, or did you not? I told you everything that I could remember, and he was so gentlemanly, how could I treat him any differently?"

"You couldn't, kid; but if it wasn't a fraternity stunt, he was taking advantage of you, and I'll drub him yet."

"No, you won't, either. I like him, and I'd like to meet him again. You know I'll never get into the habit of letting unknown men call on me. You wrote that, and it sounded like your nonsense.

"No, it wasn't. He really was a cad to call on you under any other condition — that's sort of accepted; specially when they're good frats. You'll have another call, and I'll bet anything you'll yet have your chance to turn your *Rowland*

coldly from the tower. Great for clever phrases, that Katharine of yours!"

"Bob, I believe you like her. Sometimes I've been afraid you wouldn't like each other." Had it been lighter Margaret might have seen a color on her brother's face that would have quieted such fears.

"Yes,— no one could help it — I like all your friends I've seen so far, Miss Pegsie — had the habit a long time. But this won't do, I'm going to bed — here it is twelve o'clock! But we can't have these bedtime talks much more till next summer. Somehow, kid, a fellow misses them. They're good steadiers. A fellow couldn't do much that's off if he knew he was going to say good night afterwards to his sister. They aren't all alike, Pegsie. Some don't care half so much for their own brothers as they do for another girl's brother," rising as he spoke and leaning down for a good night kiss.

"It's not all on one side, Bobbie," Margaret whispered, holding him off and looking into his face, "the help. Girls miss it who don't get close to their brothers. I'll never outgrow it."

The days of their visit to this closely united family circle, had gone by leaps and bounds. Now only two were left. Bob had found very

few opportunities for stolen moments with Katharine in his varied duties as host to these friends of Margaret's. This afternoon he had so planned it that he could get away with her to this favorite spot of his, far up in the narrows of their beautiful little lake. They had been drifting for some time, neither seeming to have much to say; both were under the spell of the place.

"Katharine, would you mind leaving off the Mister before the Bob?"

"Yes, very much. It reduces your errant spirits to a dignified status," wickedly, still occupied with the bunch of lilies she was holding in the water.

Bob plunged his paddle so suddenly into the water that he very nearly deluged Katharine.

> "Noah, he did build an ark,—
> And drove the animals in two by two!"

Katharine sang under her breath, trying to avoid the shower. Bob laughed in spite of himself.

"It states distinctly, in the original account, that they went in pairs," he retorted daringly.

"It doesn't state how they came out. Mrs. Noah being coerced into leaving her clubs to go with him alone, must have been a very cross chaperone."

"Shall I take you home, now? Have I made you feel that way by what I've said, Katharine?" The tone was so humble that Katharine looked up suddenly into the boyish face before her with one of her radiant smiles. Bob had harder work than ever to control himself.

"No, Bob." All the playfulness had gone and Katharine's face was very serious. "But — I wonder if I can make you feel what I mean? I want it to be just friendship, now. I've always wanted a big, true man for a friend. It's such a beautiful thing — friendship love. So true, so frank, so helpful. I — I love you that way, Bob; and I did so want to prove we could have that kind."

"Katharine!" his hand had taken hers. "We'll begin it now. What I've said won't make any difference, will it? I was a cad to spoil it all — make you listen when you're my guest. I — I suppose the friendship kind is best — first — to get a common interest and trust built up, but —"

"There's always a 'but' in the nicest things, Bob; don't let's have any in ours."

For a long time neither spoke. There is a tide in friendship's life that, taken at the flood, leads on to higher plains, when each heart looks into the other's altar fire and understands. Bob

and Katharine felt that they had reached this place.

Margaret saw something new in both their faces as they came up the path together. Bob lingered only a moment that night.

" Pegsie, I'm glad you love such a girl as Katharine. I'm a bigger man than I was last night."

" Bobbie, I never knew what friendship meant till I knew Katharine. She's a place for each one, and you never feel that the new ones crowd into yours. She's so big and true."

Bob knew he did not have to answer. These two understood the other's moods without the spoken word. He kissed her tenderly. " A true woman's something a man has to grow to; he can't live up to her all at once."

CHAPTER XIII

CAMP ECHOES

"The seeds that in a bunch you sowed,
Now need your smiles to nourish.
No sylvan glades, nor mist-dark road
On lakes where pine bows flourish;
But other scenes, and other wiles we'd wake,
Where feast of soul and flow of reason,
Beneath the light of human make,
Shall all our past deeds season."

SEVEN of the octet were reading this in excited chorus. The date, place, and the names of patronesses appeared in their correct places with the poem. One of the names was that of the wife of their dear "Puckers," the English "A" professor.

"Girls! Puckers was a Dartmouth man — our sins have found us out!" Araminta gasped.

"Look, these are bananas around the edge! Isn't it all perfectly lovely?" Mella was radiant.

"Certainly was the most delicious dessert I ever had in that line. We've got to live up to it, girls. I wouldn't miss it for all the world," Katharine cried in high glee.

"Now what's to wear, that's the question? Oh! Yellow'd be the thing, with —"

"Oh, no, Polly, 'we must look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it.' It won't do to be so open about it."

"Sound you are, Araminta. Now we mustn't let Mildred guess that we suspect her. She's played a mighty foxy game, just the same, but this climax will surely force her hand. The Fry man will be there," Katharine commented.

"Of course, *Rowland* will be there, and Baby Stuart, you've got to take the cue from where you left off when he called, don't you think?"

"I don't mind."

"Bob approved?" Polly asked archly.

"Not exactly, but there's no law laid down about it — I'll have to carry it out."

"How are we to be sure that our cue's not to notice the bananas? Don't you think we'll be forced to sometime before the evening's over — it would be very bright not to, though. Do you think it's like the rest of their fun to let us off that way?" Ethel asked.

"Yes, I do. They take it for granted we know if we accept. What shall we reply?" Flossy asked.

"In blank verse, of course, signed, 'The Sowers.'"

"Oh, Puck, great! Let's about it while our fire's up. It's Hallowe'en night," glancing again at the note. "This is October first. Doth the fine frenzy seize thee, my Puck?"

"Write, Araminta, write! 'Though sylvan glades'— you know we must reply in the language of the invitation as far as possible —"

"Yes, 'Though sylvan glades'—"

"'And mist-dark lake —'"

"Good, more excellent good, continue and go on. I poise my pen to listen."

"Invite us not this Hallowe'en;
Though pirates dire our hosts should be,,
We'll hie us thither at your beck.
For deeds not names, lest we forget
That fog-black night! Astray were we,
You rescuers came and led us out.
So in the mystic orgies of that feast,
We'll meet to lay aside the mask.
— The Sowers."

"Oh, Puck, Puck! that's marvelous!" With a word from this one and phrase from that it had been composed; then was carefully addressed.

"I'm consumed to know what it will be like. To think of waiting thirty-one days!" Araminta sighed.

"Now, girls, honest Injun, by the sincerity I bear toward my reformed career, I swear I've had not one thing to do with this whole thing," Mildred declared when she had read the invitation, a few moments later. "You've thought so from the first. I knew nothing of that affair at the lake, nothing of Margaret's caller. That's straight goods," laughing. "I'd keep it up to the ding of doom, but I'm not going to this last act of our comedy under false colors."

"Mildred, I axes your pardon."

"'Tis granted, old rival; but don't always bite so easily, Baby Stuart. The subject didn't even come up between Ned and me on that cruise — what he told Mella, I don't know — I was so cut out."

"Why, Mildred, you know it was to be nice to me — I don't understand him nor he me. I liked your father heaps more. He was so appreciative."

The girls laughed indulgently at this sly little confession. They never could safely predict Mella's next move.

"As long's the dean's name is among the patrons you have my consent, Pegsie, to the scheme. There's something coming your way you're not ready for. I like Mildred's stroke. There's

more to her than her feints would have us believe." Bob had run over for one of his frequent calls. In fact, the octet had already adopted him. The first Saturday night after their return to college, for old time's sake, he had taken them all to the theater as he had done that first Christmas.

"If we continue on intimate terms with Baby Stuart, we shall have to adopt him — to say nothing of other recent alliances," Araminta had decided, glancing significantly at Katharine. The frequent calls had not been wholly conferred upon Margaret and Katharine, although that ardent devotee had no cause for pangs at neglect. Ethel had been taken up the Charles several times that fall, and Mella had been canoeing twice up among the pretty isles of that charmed river. 'Tis true, the favorite spot had been reserved for Katharine. The times this pair were out were few, and those often when no one knew of their going.

When Hallowe'en night arrived, to their surprise taxis were at the door for their use when the girls sallied forth to visit their piratical hosts; Miss Deering was waiting in one of the cabs. Not one of these guests but was on tiptoe with excitement, eyes dancing, and cheeks flushed.

"It's so romantic, I'm thrilled to the bone!

The drama is about to climax," mingled with nervous giggles, were heard from one and another, as they took off their wraps in the hotel. What were they to do next?

Presently a page came forward and spoke to one of the patronesses, then politely waited for them to follow. Miss Deering with the two patronesses led the way.

"I can't get there if it's a long journey, Katharine. I've got to know my fate soon!" Margaret gasped.

"So've I!" Mildred echoed.

"I rather like it to stay this way; it may spoil it to have it cleared up," Mella declared.

They had reached the elevator. A long walk on the next floor brought them to one of the private dining-rooms of the hotel. On each side of the doors stood pages in yellow, wearing caps like the blossom-end of the banana bunch. Mildred giggled. Katharine, Araminta, and Polly turned on her direful warnings. Then the doors opened.

Just within stood "Puckers," in evening dress, save for a broad yellow tie, tipped with green. He bowed low, and offering his arm to Miss Deering, escorted her forward to a large canopied booth. The cover was the clever counterfeit of

a banana skin. He presented her to eight young gentlemen, each with yellow, green-tipped ties. In addition to this significant article of toilet they each supported a skull and crossbones, Captain Flint's old insignia, stuck conspicuously into the shirt front.

As Margaret reached the booth and faced this gallant octet, she at first could distinguish no familiar face. Very soon, however, she found herself gazing into the roguish eyes of Carl Fry. Why had she persisted in falling in with the girls and permitting herself to call him Mr. Stewpan? What she greatly feared she would do, she did; she began "Mr. Stew—" stopped short, then laughed. Last on the line was Ned Baxter. How he was enjoying the fun could be told by his broad smile as he took her hand.

"You brought your night keys this time, Miss Winters?" He could not help this allusion to their predicament two years before, when she and Mildred had taken the law into their hands, dined with the two men at the Wayside Inn, and gone to the theater in the evening to see Miss Marlowe. This put Margaret at her ease, and she lingered a moment to chat of old times, with this pleasant friend of freshman days. She found herself a bit disappointed that her escort of that night was

not present, and learned that he was abroad studying. Then Mildred came up.

"Miss Winters, great luck to meet again! Hardly expected that business so pressing would call me here again this year. What a lucky chap that brother of yours is — back in Harvard, you in Ainsley. Don't know's I'd dare repeat the call with him so near? Or do you paddle your own affairs? Should think one of such athletic proficiency might. Dainty bit, that latest addition to your circle."

His eye wandered towards Mella, who was her most radiant self, in a lavender gown of indescribable make. It seemed a part of her. Not a tinge of self-consciousness was in her wonderful eyes as she drank in the soft coloring about her. Every potted plant and clump of flowers fitted in so perfectly with everything else. All the green effects were foliage, saving the gentlemen's tie-tips.

When they started for the dining-room, "Puckers" and Miss Deering were together, one Dartmouth fellow leading with Mrs. "Puckers." The lights on the table were all shaded with yellow crêpe bananas. The color effect of the entire table was yellow.

At every plate a napkin was tucked into a paper

banana skin. The menu cards were clever imitations of skins flattened out. Nor was a dish served that did not taste of banana. The crowning dish was whipped bananas and ice cream.

Through the entire meal, with all the merriment, there was not a sign from the young ladies that they saw the point of the affair. The serenade was freely commented upon, the funny episodes of their first night in the open, and the night in the fog, but how their hosts knew of their presence, how they discovered their night retreat, not a word was asked or given. There were close parries at that which was always present in the thought, but the mask was not lowered.

Dancing closed this happy night's lark. Many were those who sought out Mella for a dance. Yet she was so simple, so unaffected through it all.

The good night waltz was in the tune of "Auld Lang Syne," in bewitching time. "Oh, but I'd like to waltz out of this world into the next!" Margaret exclaimed as she and her *Rowland* bent to the rhythm of the strains.

"I'm willing; how about Bob?"

"Oh, he likes waltzing just as well."

"Well, meantime, while you sojourn here, may I come again — some night not sacred to a meeting?"

"I'd like to have you; Friday night is best, I think. I'll try not to keep you waiting again. You can come without signal this time?"

"You guessed right; but I'm eternally grateful to you for helping me out. I'd like to pay my debt."

"It's already canceled; we've greatly enjoyed your treat. Did some of the gentlemen have sore eyes this summer?"

"Sore eyes? Oh!" laughing heartily. "You refer to the darkened camp? We were not there for any night."

"Except one!"

"No, we went back — honest — two miles up to Ned's cousins; four of us were staying there. Just by chance we stumbled on you while we were fishing near your island. Were you surprised?"

"Well, just a little; but your pirates' song told us the story. We really had guessed it before. It just completed that perfectly ideal evening." Margaret's honest enthusiasm was irresistible.

"I thought so, too. Your dance was interesting. Have them often?"

The waltz was over, and soon, the secret out, the hosts and guests parted.

"It's just as exciting as a trip to Hades with

the Sophs!" Mildred exclaimed, leaning back in the cab.

"How's *Rowland?*" Katharine asked.

"Well, I think we're all cut out by the Princess."

"How you talk, Margaret! I did have a beautiful time — just dreams all the time, drifting about in those soft lights. I like Mr. Baxter and Mr. Fry best. They're so easy to dance with. Mr. Fry's been on my island."

"I scent a romance!"

"What, you awake, Araminta?"

"Yes, when anybody threatens to run off with the Princess."

Could anything have been happier than this sequel to their summer's outing!

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE LABORATORY

"If you need me to collar him, you just let me know, Katharine," looking wickedly into her eyes. Bob was standing in a low-studded room, in a West End settlement.

"I will if I have to, but that would be defeat, just the same, for me. No, I've got to win him in some way."

"Well, of course, you know, Miss Katharine," Bob always put the "Miss" on when he was hiding his amusement, "the elements you are dealing with are those that make the mob — the restless, uncurbed street-product, as uncertain as the dust that misses the city-fathers' dustpans, and that greets our eyes at every step in these submerged quarters."

"That course in sociology is doing wonders for you; I feel so much more wise to my problems," Katharine flashed back, looking straight into those brown eyes, which always drew hers in.

"You must get next to them and use the arguments which they understand, or you can't lift

them to your point of view — your own philosophy applied, Miss Katharine. A little force is what they best understand; that's a good starter towards it," Bob continued as if not noticing her retort.

"Katharine," Margaret called from the little room back of the narrow hall, "how do you want these chairs arranged, class-wise or table-wise?"

Katharine hastened to her. "I'm going to read to them this afternoon. I've a very enthralling tale, and I'm going to see if I can't teach them repose."

"Humph! When you do, just tell me how you did it. Even the infants act like young hyenas. Bob says give them something to do. It isn't reasonable," pulling the table into the middle of the room, "to expect anything of the kind."

"Yes? He's a very wise man. But the object of this club as I understand the headworker, is to take this very street element and give it quiet and repose on Saturday afternoon."

> "I'm only a little ostrich,
> I've never been to college,
> But I can discount any knowledge,
> For I know it all!"

came jovially from the other room, broken by snatches of the whistled air. Bob was sorting

the books for the different rooms. Katharine smiled.

Margaret, Ethel, and Katharine with the help of Bob and a Harvard law student, Warren Molineux, had been now for two months carrying on a reading club in a West End settlement house, Saturday afternoons. The club was made up largely of Polish Jews of the poorest class. The work had been taxing at times, and the other girls often protested that the three might once in a while cut a Saturday. Mella had been down; Araminta had given the club some readings; Mildred had danced for them, and was now giving dancing lessons every other week to the mothers. Polly, even, had taken a hand, teaching the older girls fine needlework. Altogether the club was flourishing; certainly Bob and Katharine were worshiped, Margaret taken as a good comrade, Ethel adored by her babies, but Mella seemed strangely to understand them, and often found herself using their expressions. Yet there was always a troubled, puzzled look upon her face when she was not occupied with them. For days afterwards she would be so abstracted and in such incomprehensible moods, that finally the octet objected to her going down; despite this protest, however, she went again and again, always

with the same result. To Katharine's cautious queries she answered, " It's not to know, Kathreno. It's like the lake, the remembrances come, almost I catch them — but I must know. It's all so like something — I've felt what they feel — sometime."

To the children, these youthful helpers were " teachers "— this was the only fittable handle for such services to them. Katharine had objected, and had in vain tried to make them speak of them as friends and think of them as such, to Bob's great amusement; knowing as he did, that to no experience in the scrambling lives of these waifs did that word appeal; whereas " teacher " was the synonym for rides, excursions to the park, pretties; clean hands and faces being the only disagreeable passport to these few bright spots in their lives. These eager philanthropists could not know this. Considering the gulf between their points of view, it was remarkable how their desire to give them of their good leaped the chasm and reached the hearts of these human atoms.

One-thirty had come; no bell was needed to announce it. The dirty, narrow street, lined with dingy old houses, had been swarming with patched, smelly boys and girls for an hour. Some were holding the toddlers, closely protecting the little

brother or sister at their sides. They came jostling up the stairs, awed into a semblance of filing by the big fellow at the door, who had been known to pick a few of the bullies out by the coat collar, a good-natured twinkle in his eyes, and hold them passive by his side,— the smile being the only part of the treatment not comprehensible to the urchin's alert mind. Yet "Mr. Bob"— they had heard the girls call him that — was the only male star to which each determined to hitch his wagon; for it had been whispered about by Sammy Ivanovich that Bob was once a football captain. As that oracle was never disputed, no disconcerting evidence to contradict this tale ever struggled into their minds.

A lord in his own domain yields not readily to a higher, and Sammy had so far been moved not at all — certainly not by "the skirts," not he! His clan were corralled, with much suspicion, in Katharine's domain. She had baited him by stories generously edited by her vivid imagination, getting him to condescend to look over her shoulder, at a safe distance, at the pictures she had brought of Washington, Lincoln and other celebrities dear to those alien minds. Yet no club day passed without scenes of sudden riot; mysteriously chairs went out from under too zealous leaners

over open books; shot went down backs, and then only the most heroic lectures could calm the rioters — it had even once been necessary to call in the football hero.

To-day the look in Sammy's eye was threatening — something had gone wrong in his world. Ominous hints, under the protection of Katharine's arm, were thrown out about "a battle with the cop"; nor had she any reason to doubt that this might be the truth. Sammy had a bad record. There had been a crash this afternoon at the first departure of Katharine into the next room for books. Little Jacob was weeping from a hit in the eye when she returned. Katharine's theories were being sadly tested. The next outbreak was open anarchy in which books were nearly destroyed over a disputed statement about Washington. Plainly it was time to meet Sammy on his own level. Katharine's ire was up.

"Sammy, you leave this club if you touch another boy here. Sit down; I'll give you two minutes to decide." No result followed. While Sammy hesitated, the watch in Katharine's hand was ticking off the minutes; silence profound everywhere. Sammy leered, stuck his tongue in his cheek, and "thumbed her"; still Katharine contained herself.

Just at this psychological moment Margaret entered. Sammy felt he was bayed. "Get 'em all in — I ain't afeard o' 'em!" One unfortunate urchin grinned. Katharine could never tell just how it happened, the onset was so sudden. She and Margaret only knew that they found themselves rescuing the fragments of the smaller boys; Katharine, much beaten about, had Sammy by his collar, and was struggling to save the nose of the battered unfortunate who had precipitated the fight. It was a hard tussle, but Bob reached the scene of battle in time to see Katharine dragging down the stairs a red-faced, fighting boy using language not fit for publication. There was a frightened, awed group at the top of the stairs, with no sense of friendly sympathy, but dog-like as their instincts were, glad to see their bully "getting it."

The door finally slammed on the besieger, before her rescuer reached her side, and it was noticeable that the kicks stopped very suddenly when Bob reached the scene. Hurrying feet scampered over the brick-paved alleyway from the rear door — Sammy was conquered.

"Now I hope, Bob, you're satisfied with your training; I've certainly descended," Katharine exclaimed, but there were tears in her eyes, and Bob

had a hard battle to keep from showing her how he was affected by the victory. He had no time for demonstration, however; Katharine had hurried her cowed supporters into the room above and shut the door before he could get out a word.

While the four were waiting for a car to take them from this troublous little world, that night, a potato just missed Katharine's ear. Bob turned quickly enough to see Sammy's face peering around the corner of a low building. The hot blood mounted to Bob's face, "There, that's just far enough."

"Bob, please, not for me! I couldn't have you," placing a detaining hand on his arm.

"If ever an imp was aching for a thrashing, he is — I must!"

"No, Bob, I know I'm right. Please don't."

Bob surrendered, but it was the hardest thing that he had ever done. All the afternoon he had longed to take it out of Sammy for those bruises on Katharine's arm. It was almost too much; even the hand resting confidingly upon his arm for some seconds, did not make up for the feeling.

Peace reigned for three Saturdays. The boys, at the expense of black eyes and sore noses, had run the gauntlet of Sammy's threats and attended; but Katharine was not satisfied. It was, according

to her ideals, an expensive victory. Many and long had been the conferences of the workers. For just such as he the club had been formed.

Warren Molineux had been a fairly quiet member of the club workers. He seemed, however, in their conferences to fall in with Katharine's ideals more than did Bob. Margaret had noticed this, and ever alert for her beloved brother's interests, had sided with Bob's theories when the subjects were under discussion in their room, Katharine invariably taking Molineux's side. Ethel, anxious for both, saw clearly Margaret's mistake, although secretly agreeing with Bob's more practical ideas. From the first she had disliked Molineux's eyes. "They're not honest," had been her verdict.

This divided opinion seemed to come to a climax over Sammy's return. Bob was insistent that Sammy should be made to apologize to Katharine for his conduct; Molineux had smilingly sided with Katharine against any such pressure. "I think we all care as much for Miss Bird's dignity as you, Mr. Winters, but we are not down here to think of personal slights, but of the good of the individuals we are helping."

Ethel watched the narrowing eyes and wondered how Katharine could be impressed by his remarks. Bob shrugged his shoulders and said nonchalantly,

"If the Captain's satisfied, I ought to be." Katharine's face flushed — Bob was making fun of her. He had never, she felt, been in sympathy with her methods. The twinkle in Bob's eyes often hurt her.

"Mr. Molineux, I want Sammy back. You know the people of this ward better than Mr. Winters; will you undertake to bring him back safely?" So it was decided.

There was a good-natured, indulgent smile in Bob's eyes at Molineux's ill-concealed triumph. That night so long was the business conference between Katharine and her supporter that Ware Hall was reached before it ended. Bob, gay as a peacock, had taken Ethel's bag and sauntered off, leaving the two to follow.

The result was the return of Sammy, sullen but bound over to keep the peace. He kept, however, a very watchful eye on the athlete. His keen observation had noted Bob's attentions to Katharine, and he judged that an attack upon "his girl" meant war for the offender. To both Katharine and Bob, Sammy made it clear that it was a case of armed neutrality, not peace. His return had been felt by all, and while there were no open outbreaks directly traceable to Sammy, yet there was an atmosphere of unrest. The workers felt that

they were treading on a volcano. Bob had carried himself in his jolly, nonchalant way, always pleasant with all; but Katharine felt that his merry twinkle was a "Now I told you so." Molineux had even dared to insinuate that the children were feeling Mr. Winter's attitude towards their plan. Between Margaret and Katharine no difference was expressed, yet each felt the strained relations. That Bob no longer called as often upon Katharine all had noticed.

"No, I can't say anything. Bob does not sympathize with all Katharine's ideas, and Katharine misunderstands it. Sammy's influence is bad, but if Bob says so, Molineux will make Katharine believe Bob's jealous. If I say a word, of course, it would look as if I were crawling for my brother, and he doesn't need to crawl to any girl living!" Margaret declared to Ethel one night, with a toss of her head.

"No, Margaret, you keep out. It will work out all right. Katharine is not a fool. She does not care for Warren Molineux, but she misunderstands Bob. You just wait." Nor had she long to wait.

On Saturday night Bob came after the children had gone. He had with him an ardent promoter of the school-city, a classmate of his, who offered

to organize the club of ninety boys and girls into a club-city. Each of the four rooms was to be a ward; the city council to be made up of two aldermen from each; the mayor, judge and city clerk to be elected by all. The plan was enthusiastically adopted by all except Molineux. Katharine at once saw its good points. It was an eventful day for the club, that afternoon when the helpers organized that restless little crowd of future citizens of the republic into a club-city, drew up a charter very simply, and article by article went over it with them.

The primary followed in true democratic fashion. When the children fully realized that they were to select their own officers, their tongues were loosed. It was a difficult task to guide that rocking ship of state, but by patience and good-humored tact Bob and his colleague accomplished it. The timid were encouraged to take part, the rampant office seekers restrained, until finally the officers were all nominated. The election was set for the following Saturday.

During this memorable meeting Sammy had taken a seat somewhat apart — still the tragedy hero. Katharine, apparently ignoring his existence, took a seat near him. She had with her a book of illustrated scenes from the life of the

great animal trainer, Bostock. Casually turning the pages, she lingered over the pictures. She noticed that Sammy was curving his neck to see them, without facing her way. Katharine opened the book wider, and turned over the leaves to a scene of strife in a cage with a lioness. Sammy lost his balance in his attempt at nonchalance and leaned against her. The next few pages revealed an even more exciting scene, and brought so nearly a surrender that Katharine cautiously pushed the book nearer.

"Is they another?" More leaves were turned.

"Yes, look at him — most caught that time!"

"Is't true?"

"Yes, I've seen him do it."

"Kin I take 'im?"

"Yes,— would you like to take it home and read it?"

"'M—em!" The book changed hands. "D'e do that?"

"Yes, I saw him."

"Tain't done now?"

"Yes; it will be here next week. Would you like to go?"

Sammy looked for the first time in amazed surprise into Katharine's face. How could she be so ignorant of his tastes!

"Here's your ticket!" The magic passport to this world of wonder was in his hands. "You go, and tell us about it at the club meeting Saturday." The ticket promptly disappeared in the depths of a greasy pocket, wrapped in a dirty paper with other valuables.

Noticing the other children signing the paper Bob held before him, Sammy asked, "C'n I sign?"

"Come on, let's do it together," Katharine replied.

So victor and vanquished went up together. An appreciative glance told Bob the situation, and diplomatic relations were renewed.

The election passed off with few disturbances. To count the vote, the election inspectors remained late. Sammy had departed showing very little interest in the outcome.

The first meeting of the city council brought about the ratification of the commissioners appointed by the new mayor. It was a stormy one; Sammy's name was proposed as chief of police. A bare majority could be inveigled into giving him the election. It was also voted to include within the city precincts the wards in which they lived outside the club, the street commissioners to cooperate to keep the streets clean. Cigarette smok-

ing was voted a misdemeanor among boys under sixteen.

As for Sammy, when he was told of his appointment, he turned as white as he could under the layers of dirt, and slowly without a word turned away. Katharine felt that he had taken it as irony; but Bob felt otherwise. The next Saturday, sure enough, there was Sammy, scrubbed to the edge of his high celluloid collar; hands clean to the wristbands. His face was tense and pale with the load of responsibility. All through the two hours he tiptoed about to see that the citizens of every ward were obeying the laws, now posted in each room. When faces and hands were found dirty, health officers were notified. So comical was the situation that Bob, Margaret, and Ethel were obliged several times to retreat to get control of themselves. Katharine alone kept her dignity.

That seemed to be the end of the problem with Sammy. As to his devotion to Katharine, many a Saturday did the designing young rascal get her bag ahead of Molineux or Bob and very cunningly lure her into walking over the bridge with him, to tell her some of his troubles. Bob laughingly declared he saw triumph in his eyes each time he sailed off in this manner with his idol. Even the city officers had to admit Sammy's improved status.

CHAPTER XV

PLOTS AND COUNTERPLOTS

"WHERE'S Mella? Isn't she going to help us plan out this wardrobe? She's always so good at fixings," Margaret asked, settling herself with a resigned air before a heap of variegated calico. Picking up a strip that might have been the half of a clown's suit or a pair of pajamas, she tried it on Ethel. "I meant to have taken Sammy's height; but he's about your size, don't you think so?"

"Depends on just how you mean,— in his own opinion or bodily proportions?" Katharine replied, busily cutting out a blouse of dun colored cambric.

"How on earth did they ever wear these detestable things? It's no wonder they bowed as if they had the stomach ache," Polly spluttered, gathering the cloth nimbly as she talked. "This makes the tenth ruff."

"Thing is, girls, how are we to manage about the high boots for the boys? We must have them, for their educational value; it's best to make

things appear just as they were in Billy's time. Not in an age will these benighted ones have such an opportunity for enlightenment. Have you any idea, Puck, of the measurements of Mr. Molineux's boot space?" Margaret and Mildred giggled at the arch expression of Araminta's question. Katharine appeared not to hear it. Relations had become somewhat less strained between Bob and Katharine of late, but Molineux had been very ardent, and many of his suggestions were disturbing the harmonious working out of the new scheme.

"Well, there's one thing certain sure, that when this dramatic effort is off my hands nothing will inveigle me into trying another! I'm getting too aged. Here we are taking all our spare time —"

"Spare time?" came from several of the girls.

"Your tasks are heavenly cinches to mine. Wish you could see those dear souls do those folk-dances. Honestly, if they weren't so patient in trying I should long ago have given up. They are so funny. I had seven violent coughing spells last Saturday and had to retire to recover — but they really are improving," Mildred exclaimed.

"I don't see but you are surviving, children. I know it's good for you to sacrifice yourselves this

time to the cause. Here Topsy, try on these bloomers," Katharine demanded.

Mildred obeyed with exaggerated meekness. "These are to grace Ikey and Jawcob?" donning the articles. They were for the suits of *Petruchio.*

"Sammy will make an adorable *Grumio* — he's really a tragedian; but that's the best kind of comedy stuff, so he'll do," Araminta commented.

"Dress rehearsal Saturday night, Christmas only a week off. It's absolutely unheard of, this giving up my vacation to charity. Puck, no one but you could have made me. Poor Dad is mourning over it now. But since I've reformed, no one knows me. How do you suppose I can keep up the moral rôle when your bolstering influence is withdrawn, Princess, my angel?" stopping in the midst of her swaggers, as that young lady entered with unusually bright eyes and heightened color, "even in — Oh, Puck, what is this stuff? — in fustian I kneel to thee! Do not scorn me!" endeavoring to clasp Mella in her arms, as she knelt before her.

"No, never to any but my *Romeo,*" escaping to Katharine's outstretched arms.

"What has that foreign man been saying to my *Juliet?*" in a half whisper.

"That's not to tell — now," the last for only Katharine's ear.

"Mella, we've got to look into this. That's five calls since October, from Prof. Metronani. Far too many; pray explain thyself," slipping a buff coat sleeve on to Mella's arm as she spoke.

Mella laughed softly to herself, and cuddled up beside Polly on the window seat, and began to try on the ruffs.

"I wish I had a locket with a legend," Polly sighed. "It's so nice to have the little Prof call — such eyes!"

"Seems to me the octet's done nothing but 'fuss' the whole year. I'm the only old maid in the crowd."

"Why, Flossy! I've been perfectly steady!"

"Well, you've done a good stunt at playing sister then. I s'pose since the advent of the lawyer we've all got to support Bob's drooping spirits," Mildred retorted, looking at Margaret, and then at Katharine. "I must say that some people have poor taste in eyes. Ned says Warren, dear, is doing the boss act in the ward — understudy to Kelly there."

"Well, I think that Ned might be in better business," Katharine retorted.

"WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE IT HOME AND READ IT?"

"Neddie, my lad, you made a blunder," Mildred humbly apostrophized.

"Seems to me, Puck, my dear, that you bite rather quickly on that hook these days," Araminta commented.

Katharine made no reply, as she picked up the blouse Mildred had tossed to her. Margaret was whistling softly to herself; Ethel looked troubled. Strained moments were not unknown this year in this otherwise harmonious group of friends. Some of the girls could not resist these flings; it was such a novelty to see their usually serene, unruffled Katharine flustered, often peppery upon this subject. Reticent as Katharine always was about her affairs, unchanged as the outward manner of Margaret and Katharine had been towards each other, yet they all felt the enforced ceremony that always comes with changed relations between friends. The meetings of the clan had been less frequent, and the often preoccupied quiet of Katharine's manner damped these. This was the first time since Thanksgiving that they had all been together in the old way and this bid fair to be inharmonious.

"I think that we are getting crabbed with old age, girls; I feel senior dignity in all my joints,"

Araminta drawled, striving to relieve the pressure of the atmosphere.

"Girls, we've a lot to plan for that play," Ethel suggested timidly. "Ned, *Rowland,* Bob, and Mr. Molineux are going to sing between the acts in costume, and I was wondering whether the folk-dances couldn't come in at the close, right around a real tree?"

"Oh, lovely, Cinderella! It will give the poor things something to look at, and they won't feel so awkward."

"That's what I thought, Mildred, and you know those parents have such a little show here in this new country; the children learn our ways so quickly, and this will give them a chance to come forward. It'll be such a lesson to their children. They're so proud to think they can take part."

"Cinderella's in her element, girls — she's reforming."

"They really do finely, Topsy. I saw them last week when they rehearsed so well that you clapped them — their dear, burdened lives, think what this bright spot means!"

"Cinderella, you should have been born in the days of martyrs. Can't you see her beaming at

the stake?" Katharine flashed in her old genial way, which somewhat revived the group.

"Now try on my ruffs. How big's Bob's neck, Baby Stuart? He's got to be measured — I'll choke the others to his size," Polly declared fiercely. Soon all were dutifully choking in ruffs.

A collar of Bob's was found in Margaret's bureau drawer, left over from a hall masquerade, and the puckering strings were changed to fit.

"One more week of slave driving, then I suppose we may retire to private life and attend incidentally to college duties. I knew that when Puck began this strenuous career we'd all be gathered into the sweep of her philanthropic skirts," Araminta sighed, tossing a finished jerkin to the couch.

"Social work's all right, but college girls have too much else to attend to," Flossy declared positively.

"Oh, but Flossy, think what we've learned that we can't get in books."

"Yes, Cinderella, mine's nearly all *out* of books," Mildred corrected.

"I've got far more out of this than out of Prof. Carter's lectures. It's dirty and horrid and smelly and all that," Margaret's tip-tilted nose showing a trifle higher angle, "but you have to

see behind that — I have at least. I honestly do love the dirty little imps."

"I wish you could have seen Baby Stuart that first day, girls! Now I doubt if she even thinks of it."

"Oh, yes, I do, lots of days; but they are human to me now — I never felt that side before."

"You dear missionary spirits, I'm perfectly willing you should enjoy the aroma of that region unmolested. I'll make ruffs for them, but don't ask me to love them or go down there and dance with them any more," Polly commented.

"Kathreno, I think that we've got the meaning of that legend on my locket and it's the same as the one I found," Mella said, when the girls had gone. "Professor says that they were together once — he fitted them to-night. I grew up with mine, but where did the other come from and when did I lose it? How? It's to know my past,— to find that!"

"Can't you tell your old doctor — your guardian's — about it, Mella? Perhaps he could trace the owner of the one you found this summer. It's like the lake and the rest of your feelings, isn't it?"

"Yes, yes, and that down there — I was there in the slums once. I feel the terror, the sad, sad

feeling of it when I'm there. It's just like a bad memory of something." Mella's eyes were full of tears, tears which never seemed to flow.

"We all feel the sadness — it clings to us when we get away, Princess," taking a hand in hers. "You couldn't have come from there — you came from a castle," smiling into the beautiful eyes.

"Perhaps — my ancestors — came from some place where things were all beautiful; I love them so, but — it wasn't since I remember. I'm not a child, Kathreno. Sometimes I feel I had all that far, far back with the lake and Mother. Oh, Kathreno, it's to know my mother — my father — who I am!"

"Mella, you will. I know it! It can't be otherwise. But, Princess, you won't forget that Prof. Metronani is thinking of you — not your parents?"

A blank, uncomprehending look was Mella's reply to this tentative question of Katharine's. "Of me? Oh, Kathreno, no! no! He is only kind. I could not think anything else. Why should he care for me — an unknown girl — it's to help — he is so kind — no, no, no!" as if she could not accept the thought. "He's just a dear, dear friend."

"Mella, there's no such thing — friendship

with men — they're not big enough — they don't understand." Katharine was almost bitter; the outburst was not for Mella alone.

"Mr. Bob?" Katharine's face flushed.

"No, no, Mella, you don't know him. He's not big enough, either."

Mella was thoughtfully studying Katharine's face, her own trouble for the moment forgotten. Her attitude hitherto had been absolutely neutral as to the two sides of this vexing question of Bob and Molineux. "There are some things you see, Kathreno, but — but I think you don't read always just right — Bob and the professor." It was said so quietly, with that deep, impenetrable manner which Mella so often made her friends feel.

"I — I wish I could believe it!"

CHAPTER XVI

LEST AULD CUSTOMS BE FORGOT

THE population of the club-city began to increase so alarmingly "just before Christmas" that the city fathers found it necessary to enact very stringent immigration laws to meet the difficulty. A tax had therefore been levied of one cent per week on all citizens. This seemed in a measure to meet the situation. Everything was not "free." More effective than this was the information, passed about to would-be citizens outside, that no presents were to be distributed by the workers. The time was to be one of joy-giving, the play was to take the place of offerings.

This also had proved itself a problem. Every citizen longed to express himself upon the stage. In all classes the eternally human instinct for dramatic expression is strong, and these children are from highly dramatic races. As all could not have a part, the workers were puzzling over the best solution of this problem.

"I would suggest drawing for these parts," Mr. Molineux ventured. "There can be no feel-

ing then. We could stuff the box with marked slips, and arrange the selection; in that way we could get a good pick for the parts. What they don't know, won't hurt them," smiling humorously at the effect upon his listeners.

"Well, I shouldn't want to be cheated in that way! Don't we teach them to practice the golden rule, as the bottom of all good government?"

"That's really for their good, though, Miss Winters; they'll get a better cast — more fun out of it in the end."

"Ward politics in the club," Bob remarked, looking roguish.

"I don't think that Mr. Molineux really wants us to cheat; I see his point, but I think I don't want it done, either. I suppose it may be sentiment, but I would rather be able to assure them it was straight chance; you couldn't if you did that."

"Well, I hadn't really got as far as that, Miss Bird,— the wording could be managed, probably; but if you feel that way, why, just forget I mentioned it," smiling benignly, as if her wish were his only thought.

Katharine always would look up at Bob at the wrong time. He had not had time to get his twinkle disposed of. "It would be better if we

could choose them. There is Sammy; I do so want him to be *Grumio*."

"But, would that be doing it their way? It's really their play," Ethel suggested cautiously.

"You're right, Ethel. We stick to the lots," Katharine decided.

That afternoon, in each ward, the plan was explained. Now just what evil genius made Katharine select Molineux to make this explanation she could not have told, nor why she asked him to guard and conduct the drawing of lots by those ambition-torn little citizens. There were much pushing, some under-cuts, a little pinching in the line that filed up. The officers did their best considering their own states of mind. Sammy was fairly pale. To take a real part and shine before Miss Katharine was the cry of his heart. Mr. Molineux was eyed very suspiciously by him.

"Ee ain't goin' to plunk no trick on me, ee ain't," was Sammy's muttered threat to his subordinates. He sidled up in the rear and watched. Bob was moving about with books, keeping his merry eyes on the line and incidentally upon the distributor of fate. *Petruchio's* and *Katharine's* parts had been given to Molineux and Katharine, to insure a good play; the other parts were in the hands of the children. Bob, Ned, and Mr. Fry

were to act as retainers of the court, to give it tone. Sammy, convinced that he had discovered things several times, waited till Bob should come by again.

"Ee done 'em! I seen 'im pushin' slips out to 'em!" This was intended as confidential, but Katharine, passing just then, overheard.

Bob laughed and patted Sammy's shoulders. "You're seeing things, Sammy. Go on now and take your turn." Sammy was not pacified. But when he drew the slip marked *Grumio,* his face was actually handsome. He had discovered nothing crooked about his fate.

The next five weeks were a dream to Sammy. He tore about the streets cracking imaginary whips, muttering his lines, until the officers of the beat were nearly convinced that his case needed an alienist's skill. The club meetings had been converted into rehearsals, and all the girls who could use a needle had been coaxed into helping to prepare the simple costumes for the occasion. All ward eight was coming — at least, all who had children in the club. A hall had been donated in the vicinity, and the entire octet, even to Polly, with Bob, Ned, Molineux, Mr. Fry and a friend had been busy all day turning the hall into a bower of green. A large tree

was ready to be placed in the center of the hall, around which the tired mothers were to bring back the old folk-dances of their native Poland, after their children had finished their entertainment.

The sight was one these care-free young people would never forget,— that hall of shiny-rubbed faces, shawl-draped, short-skirted women, young-old, and old-young, with strangely childish faces, some of them above gnarled bodies, misshapen, by early motherhood and battered lives. On the other side, their partners, standing for once — these twentieth century young dames so willed it — while their wives sat. That the humor was not gone from them was proved by the slow kindling laughter of the adults at the horse-play of this rollicking farce of Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew." Katharine made a capital shrew, nor was Mr. Molineux a backward *Petruchio*.

"More gamy than one would think. The boss comes out to-night!" Mildred confided to Ned, as they stood among the courtiers on the stage. "I can't endure him! It's beyond my light to see how Katharine can be so deceived. She's usually so quick."

"Playing it on Winters, eh?"

"Can't see why. Bob has to put in his oar now and then to keep things steered straight in the club,— he's right, always, but it's usually against 'Molly's' suggestions. I think Bob's a darling."

"There's my cue." Ned was off.

"Ethel, isn't Katharine simply perfect to-night? I do wish you could make her see what a scamp that Molineux is. Sammy says he sorted the slips, he saw him — probably for the children of some of the patrons in his ward."

"She'll see it, Mildred. Katharine isn't blind — she really cares a heap for Bob, but she just misunderstands his fun and his opposition to Mr. Molineux's ideas. He does let his fun hit hard, at times, in the meetings, and it does look suspicious. You see Katharine wants Bob to fit *her* ideal, and he has to be himself."

"Bob's an angel! See what he's stood,— Katharine's way of keeping a fellow off at that ten-foot-pole distance while being so polite all the time. I'm glad Bob hasn't crawled to her. He understands her better than she does him. There goes the last act; now for my seraphs,— Neddie boy hasn't a bad feature, has he?"

"Mildred, you really do care, don't you?"

"Good-by! 'Trip my Audreys'!"

Inspired by the music or taken out of themselves by the play, these tired-faced mothers danced around that tree, their little ones dancing with them until the old hall rocked with mirth. When Bob and his crew, abetted by the octet, passed among them with sweetmeats and hot cider, in which were bobbing apples, it seemed indeed that the old times had come back, and these men and women of far-off climes were at home with these hosts and hostesses of another world than theirs.

The refreshments were followed by the Portland Fancy. To catch glimpses of the four young men in their quaint Elizabethan costumes dancing " all hands round " with the short-kirtled, stout dames, and the young ladies guiding tactfully their " bearded pards," as Mildred called them, was almost too much at times for the spirits of these young college people. Surely the days had gone backwards and the citizens of two worlds, two civilizations, were plunged into a social group and were making merry withal. Only a glance or an appreciative pinch did they dare bestow upon each other as they met in the dance.

Sammy's moment of supreme bliss came when, almost breathless with excitement, it came his turn to encircle his Katharine. He never could

have told how he got through that figure; he only knew that Heaven had no temptation for him for some time afterwards!

"Sammy, you look splendid in that suit, and I was so proud of the way that you acted that I nearly forgot my lines." Yes, Miss Katharine said these very words! Never again could Fortune touch him with her frowns.

"Katharine, the last time you were on earth you must have been a shrew —'twas to the manner-born," Bob remarked as they whirled.

"Time discloses a good many things, Mr. Bob." She was gone, and Margaret was with him.

"Bobby, I'm proud of you in more than one way. I could eat you, you look so darling tonight. That eel Molineux!"

"You'd have the worst case of indyspepsia you ever enjoyed — so'll he some of these days."

So on down the line these dancers passed; these merry-go-round conversations were snatched by the octet and their friends in their progress.

"Hello, Neddie! Did you ever experience such fun in your life? It's better than ten shows!"

"Not half so good as one with you."

"Pshaw! Grow broader, Neddie, in your in-

terests." Mildred was on to her next partner — that next was Bob.

"Sammy says he wants a job, Bob."

"What's that?"

"Blacking the eye of that political economist — our worthy helper."

"Sammy's jealous." Mildred had only time to laugh as she comprehended Bob's meaning, and the twinkle in his eyes.

Mella was dancing with a dark-bearded man. Her face was white. As they reached the door leading into the hall, Bob had just taken her hand. "Please, Mr. Winters, will you step into the hall with me?"

"Miss Cosimo, something's wrong; can I help you?"

"No, I guess I'm all right now — would you mind taking me home? — I feel so tired — just tell Ethel and Margaret I was not feeling to stay."

Bob was back in the hall in an instant. In a very short time he had changed his clothes and he and the two girls were on their way home. Ethel and Bob laughed divertingly over the events of the evening, and Mella joined in bravely before they reached the hall.

Katharine had stolen out, beckoning to Sammy. She was troubled over Mella's sudden departure,

and so Sammy convoyed her all the way to the Hall door. Mella had gone to her room, where Katharine found her, and learned the truth. The dark-bearded man had given her another clue.

"I remembered his face at first; it's twelve years since he gave me to my guardian; says some men left me with him and his wife, and they brought me up till I was five. Oh, Kathreno, I feel I'm going to find out more this week in New York!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE JUNIOR FROLIC

THE time-honored event of the junior year is always the Junior Frolic. The nature of the event must be kept a secret from other classes. To do this, requires much ingenuity on the part of the members. Perhaps, for this reason, the anticipation is as enjoyable as the event itself. Secrecy having been entirely monopolized by the masculine portion of the human race, the fact that they did accomplish the deed was due, no doubt, to their being entirely in a feminine world by themselves.

At Margaret's suggestion it had been decided to reproduce a scene from real ranch life as far as the big hall would adapt itself to such purposes. This required intimate knowledge of the terms familiar to that life. These they had first hand from two of their number who were ranchmen's daughters. All their meetings had been held in Mildred's room, because this spot seemed to be the farthest from the inspection of wily sophomores and seniors. Their difficulties were dou-

bled by the fact of four of their members rooming with seniors.

"All the more spice, girls," Mildred had said when this condition had been lamented. "We'll whip them out of their wisdom teeth!" They were in the hall at the time, reconnoitering. Whatever the difficulties had been, the feat had been accomplished. Ethel and Margaret had twice narrowly escaped being caught in their room working on the costumes.

The night of the twenty-second of February arrived. Every bulletin board had been diligently censored lest some half-guessed fact be posted to give clever guessers a clue. All the afternoon the juniors had been carrying mysterious looking bundles to the hall. One senior declared that she had heard the clink of spurs, and that some scene from chivalry was to be enacted. The suggestion of spurs had made the cold shivers run down the backs of the juniors, but the closest vigilance had failed to discover so far any hint to the public. The doors of the hall had been locked all day and the curtains drawn. The night before, Mildred, Margaret, and Ethel had stolen out between nine and ten and taken nearly all the bundles needed for trimming the hall, and locked them in the hall closet. Every precaution had been taken,

even to delegating two of their number, who lived outside the dormitories, to spend the night there.

The girls had all invited guests. As Ethel, Mildred, and Margaret had no friends near enough to come, they had invited their friends in the octet. Many of the juniors did not take active parts in these affairs. These, with the invited guests, occupied the gallery.

At sharp six o'clock, as the girls were putting the finishing touches to everything, they were horrified by a scream of triumph from the gallery, where suddenly the senior banner was unfurled, accompanied by a cry of "chuck, boys, chuck!" The girls ran in wild excitement to cut off the intruders' retreat and keep them from spreading the news. As they reached the stairway, they heard a familiar giggle and hurried up to find Mildred, who had left, as they supposed, sometime before, with several other juniors, convulsed with laughter at their mates' discomfiture. Margaret was almost spunky.

"Well, I think you might get a better time for your jokes!"

"Now, Margaret, you need to have some setback after all this smooth sailing — I couldn't resist. You were so cock-sure that we had done it."

Margaret was smiling in a moment at her own

pique. "I can't really believe we have succeeded yet. I'm so glad it's just you. I'll stay here on guard till you get back, Mildred — I've my khaki suit here, so can change while I wait."

At just seven-thirty the guests began to arrive. It was a strangely foreign scene to most of their eyes. Only a few juniors had been on the committee of decorations, so much of the whole effect was a surprise. A green floor-covering had been laid, giving the effect of grass. All along one side of the hall were improvised carts, several effigies of bronchos tethered here and there, and a tent stood in one corner with the sign of "X Ranch" over it. At the other end was a huge steaming kettle on a tripod of logs, beneath a very realistic fire. Stretched between two poles was a diminutive effigy of a calf; beneath this were red electric bulbs, arranged in red paper to give the effect of a fire. Nearby was a handcart rigged up with canopy top, the back end of the wagon being let down to represent the "chuck wagon," at a real round-up, where the cook molds the biscuit dough. Before it, in khaki suit, top boots, and sombrero, with a knife and pistol in his belt, worked a savage-looking cowboy. Forty or fifty in the same costumes hurried about the hall, snapping their whips, jingling their spurs,

and apparently getting ready for some important event.

In the middle of the hall, creating a great deal of mirth among the spectators, were cowboys lassoing some tiny toy animals. Then, all of a sudden, a thundering noise as of galloping horses was heard, and into the arena a dozen cowboys galloped, astride long poles, the heads of which were stuffed to represent horses — black, brown, and spotted. They made the course, yelling and brandishing their whips, and firing off toy pistols, all their attention riveted upon the group in the center, at which they all at once began to throw their lassos. Then, apparently having thrown the animals, they galloped toward the center, yelling and encircling their mates excitedly. The word " maverick " was often heard. Other cowboys rushed upon the scene, and the situation was wilder than ever. Then all hurried off.

The orchestra began to play. Every cowboy stamped his foot and one of their number began to call off the initials of the ranchmen, as the tally-book man would at a regular round-up, giving the brands. As each was called, he would dash to cover and return with a lady on his arm. This continued till all the fifty cowboys had secured a partner. Their partners were dressed in short,

white duck skirts, and sailor waists, the orange ties matching those of their escorts. For the most part the cowboys wore long mustachios and Vandyke beards, which gave these girlish faces a most rakish appearance. Nor was there lacking a certain bravado that carried off the part. The denim leggins with loose tops gave the effect of high-topped boots, so often worn by cowboys. No difficult flight of the imagination was required for the guests to feel themselves transported to those regions about which, in play and story, hangs so much glamour.

Suddenly there was a blast from a cornet, and an out-rider dashed forward and called out, "Twine your partners!" This was the first number on the programme. In place of the regular brand, which distinguishes each ranchman's cattle from his neighbors on the range, each cowboy had placed the initial of his partner for that dance.

Mildred led the grand march in her dashing style, dropping into a lively two-step at the end.

"All drill! Lead your partners to the chuck wagon!" Each gallant pair galloped toward that wagon. On the shelf-like end of the wagon was a punch bowl filled with tempting fruit-punch,

from which a cowboy ladled to each thirsty guest a cooling drink.

"It's far too clean," Katharine chuckled from the gallery above, to Araminta. "The cook doesn't have wash day for that board once a year, my uncle says."

The second dance was called "Horse Wranglers' two-step," in honor of the men who herd the saddle horses. There was a rush for partners, and soon the merry company was galloping over the plain to the tune of "Hiawatha." The cowboys who were without partners for the dance, circled with much gusto the dancers, cracking their whips, hallooing lustily; those dancing were whistling the air.

Scarcely had the gallant hosts comfortably seated their guests after their strenuous dance, and begun to chat merrily with them, when the orchestra again sounded its note of warning. This was the "Ropers' waltz," ropers being the men who lasso the cattle for branding. At the close of this waltz the outrider again called "chuck!" following the fashion of the ranch cook when he has taken the lids off the pots, preparatory for dinner.

Just as all were finishing their ices, the orchestra sounded the reveille for the "stampede quad-

rille," and instantly every cowboy was on his feet. In the spirit of this problem of a ranchman's life, as if their partners were in very truth madly stampeding, or in danger of getting into that state of panic, the cowboys galloped about for their partners, and, when once they had secured them, galloped off to their places for the dance. This fun ended in a cake-walk; but it would have been a hard task to have awarded the cake, so many were there among those rollicking couples whose feats were worthy of note. Yet the girls, many of them, felt that it should be given to Mildred.

During the next intermission a cowboy dashed out on a tiny effigy of a bronco and presented at the end of his lasso a stewpan to Margaret, amidst shouts of laughter. To Mildred another cowboy presented a tiny stage, with two boys, dressed as women, sitting in front of it. So the evening passed, all the numbers bearing the names of familiar incidents in ranch life. The last was called "Maverick's Home Sweet Home Waltz," in honor of those stray calves which are rounded up each year and rebranded or sold at auction if the brand is not clear. Immediately the girls began to sing this song, those in the galleries joining them. Thus ended the junior frolic of the class of 1911.

CHAPTER XVIII

UNWINDING SNARLS

THE plan of the club-city at the settlement seemed to be working. Even Mr. Molineux granted that it was an interesting experiment. Problems came up often that the lawyer among them could not solve — more often Bob's ready, offhand ideas proved the talisman. The boys did not confide in "Mr. Bob's rival," as they considered Warren Molineux. Sammy, loyally hitched again to his star, sullenly withdrew even from Katharine whenever Molineux made his appearance in her vicinity. His opinion, no doubt was influenced somewhat by personal feelings — he rarely got an opportunity these days for walks over the bridge; Bob had been more generous.

"Want me ter pinch 'im one — I kin, w'en 'es nosin' round here wid the whole squeeze in de ward?" Sammy asked one evening when walking consolingly to the car with Bob, who gravely thanked Sammy, and told him he would let him know when he wanted the job done. From that moment the bond was indissoluble.

Margaret often got into tangles over the problems they all had to meet in this attempt at social work. "Bob, I never seem to see it from their point of view. Katharine does and so do you; I don't have the patience to wait."

"Pegsie, you go at it too head-on; you don't ever keep half an eye cocked on the landing place."

This day she was trying so hard. "But, Jacob," she was expostulating, "you mustn't eat in here — we couldn't let them all, so you can't — it would all be so dirty!"

"Naw 'twon't — just one," eating his dirty peanuts greedily. Katharine entered in time to hear this part of the dialogue.

"Jacob!" His roguish eyes looked up into hers, his mouth too full for utterance, "when I'm down in court, with everybody packed in close up to me, and I want to stretch out my arms so," her fist came fairly hard against Jacob's nose, causing that young person to jump, "why shouldn't I do it if I want to?" Jacob grinned for answer. "Well, now don't you see we have to give up some things when there are a lot of us?" She had won.

Things went on smoothly with the exception of these occasional ripples. Often, as formerly, Bob

seemed to be the one to demur at Molineux's suggestions, sometimes at Katharine's, when in his judgment they were not wise. This fact irritated Katharine. She felt that this opposition could be from no other reason than Bob's jealousy, and that by this very act he was not carrying out her ideals of friendship. It seemed small — why couldn't he be as generous as Molineux, who had helped to carry out Bob's ideas so magnanimously? That Katharine was not happy, even her merriest manner would not conceal from them.

At the next executive meeting Mr. Molineux proposed securing the coöperation of the city street commissioners for that district with the juvenile commissioners, in an effort to bring about better conditions in that ward.

"Boys of this gang don't tie up to city officials, Molineux. We've got to educate them slowly to that point — you'll only make them think we're coming a deal with their enemies. I think the less our little commissioners have to do with ward politicians the better for their civic morals." Bob was looking directly at Molineux, privately enjoying that gentleman's confusion. Katharine lost neither the expression in the eyes nor Molineux's embarrassment.

"That seems a good idea, Mr. Molineux," ignoring Bob's protest.

"I thought so, Miss Bird. I have never found city officials anything but clean men."

"So be it! Bring it up in the city council this afternoon; we'll test it out there." Bob replied in perfect good humor.

When, however, the scheme was proposed, dark, suspicious faces met Mr. Molineux's, and a long, sullen silence followed. "Ee's getting us pinched by de guys he's workin' for!" Sammy declared in a grumbling stage whisper to his supporters. "I'm fer digs!" That was the signal for a retreat. Nor could any protest on Molineux's part avail. Bob stood quietly by and let things work out. It was his hour of triumph, but no sign of rejoicing was in tone or eyes.

"You fer that, too?" Sammy asked, sidling up to Bob, as he and Margaret and Ethel were on their way to the car that night.

"No, Sammy; and you stay by us — we need you."

"Not fer no such gags as his'n!" and Sammy was immovable. His whole faction would withdraw from the club.

"You see, Miss Bird, Mr. Winters' plan of

self-government falls flat when tested by practical relation to the city outside."

"I'm not sure that you are right, Mr. Molineux." She had never noticed how narrow his eyes were before. A pair of merry brown ones, with no cunning depths, came before her.

"I have seconded his work, but I did so to help you — I would do anything to help you — to make you happy."

Katharine started and drew away from the face looking so meaningly into hers. With the tone the whole winter's episodes passed before her mind. How blind and silly she had been! This then was his motive — wholly a personal one, not for the cause! The hot blood mounted to Katharine's temples, tears of vexation into her eyes. Sammy at that moment came around the corner.

"Oh, Sammy, I forgot about that walk!" taking her bag from her astonished escort's hands. "You'll excuse me; I promised to walk over the bridge with Sammy to-night."

Before Sammy and Katharine parted, the truce had been cemented. The boys would come back. For the first time since the girls had known Katharine, that night she shut herself in her room and refused to see them.

When the lights had been put out, Margaret stole into Katharine's room and stood hesitating for a moment. She had been angered at Katharine's attitude in the meeting that afternoon; she knew that something was wrong. Bob had persistently refused, during these trying weeks of misunderstanding, to discuss Molineux. He had been the same kind brother, yet he had feelings which he did not discuss with her, and she felt things were not on the same frank footing as of old. That his silence had been to save this impulsive, loyal sister from a hard position, she had not realized — it was Ethel who had pointed this out to her. She had been sure that her feeling toward Molineux was not wholly prejudice, for the other girls had felt it also.

" Katharine, I don't care anything about whose side you take, I can't see you suffer! " Katharine was sobbing as if her heart would break.

" Kiddie, please, not to-night — sometime we'll talk — I know now."

In a second they were in each other's arms. Not a word was said, but Margaret knew she had her old friend back again.

A few afternoons later, Katharine and Bob were canoeing far up the Charles. It was late in May, and the first canoe trip since last fall.

The old friendly relationship they had drifted into tacitly, but they intuitively knew the old footing could never be resumed without a frank talk.

"I got his point of view, at the last, Bob. If I had before, I'd never have put him out as I did." Katharine's victory over Sammy was under discussion; that subject was a safe bridge to lead them back to the old standing before their friendship had been obstructed.

"Perhaps you're right; you often are — in some lines," the last was added, as if thinking aloud to himself. "But if ever an urchin deserved a thrashing that scamp did, Katharine, and I still think it would have been good for him had you let me give it to him." They were beginning on the edge of their first misunderstanding and working back to the present.

"It wouldn't have done you any good, Bob, and we'd never have won him as we have — I think — I was right — in that." It was hard for Katharine to talk,— strange lumps kept getting into her throat. Bob did not look up from his half-hearted paddling. Both had been silent at long intervals during their ride up the river,— even Sammy and the club would not do this afternoon.

"Katharine, I'd have trusted you more — I did

— friends ought to, even against appearances. You thought that I was jealous — I wasn't; I believed you meant what you said this summer — I knew you weren't flirting; you're too big for that, but —"

"Bob, I — I once thought I was bigger, nearer to what I said that — that other talk — but I — I'm not! I — I shouldn't think you'd even want to have it — a — a friendship, now!" The last was almost a sob.

"Katharine! — don't — please don't say any more — like that."

Bob's eyes met Katharine's — they were full of tears like the voice.

They were close up under the shade of "their island" when Katharine raised her head, and smiled through the wet lashes into his face. Bob never could have told you how he got that canoe back to the Ainsley landing — nor could Katharine have pieced out the account.

CHAPTER XIX

CLEARING-UP SHOWERS

"WHAT am I offered, ladies, for this very valuable piece of property, an Italian grammar, owned by a defunct member of this renowned octet? It's moist now with her tears from Gerry's pleasantries in those far-off freshman days. Twenty-five, am I offered? Going, twenty-five, twenty-six — ah, that smiling face yonder! twenty-six for heart's blood tears; they are worth more than plain ones — oh, an appreciative soul! twenty-seven for this tear-stained, thumb-marked bundle of memories! Ladies, I saw those tears fall four long years ago; fall from the eyes of one soon to take upon her the sober, leaden brow of a senior — it was her first tiff. Gerry snapped his goatee, wabbled — ah, I perceive you all have grievances, each and all! come forward, gaze upon it! Here that snapped one's thumb has clasped to steady her tottering memory, her overburdened freshman mind. Let us open the book, my mates. I perceive you are moved. The word I turn to — how can I pronounce it? —

is heart!" Shrieks of laughter followed this tirade.

Katharine was standing upon a packing box; around her, in little unordered heaps, was almost every kind of object usually owned by college girls, from discarded slippers to battered note books. Packed into the room and around the door, in the hall, were the majority of the girls in Ware Hall. It was the last Saturday night before commencement, and Katharine and the other girls had advertised an auction of "household effects." Katharine was keyed to a high pitch of mirth. Very close under the external gayety of the girls was a minor key, which each was trying to avoid,— their close life together was at an end. This allusion to a heart was very clever, for all knew that *Rowland* was seen frequently in "his tower" these days. Margaret had laughed with the others, but no sign of confusion was visible.

"Mighty queer how the auctioneer happened to hit upon that word!" Mildred commented dryly. Katharine was so sunburned from her frequent canoe trips that no additional color could be discerned.

"Is this all I am offered for this trophy? The gift is thine, little sophomore; treasure it; it will

be a rich legacy—'tis given thee! Ah, me!" holding up a pack of freshman themes. "Here are Rosy's dainty pencilings. What fond memories they awaken of the days—"

"Look out, Puck, you're on the wrong verse! It ends ' 'ere we were wed,' " Polly admonished. Even Katharine was a bit confused; as for the girls,— the auction was stopped for fully five minutes.

"When, when, Katharine, right off after commencement?"

> "Poor little Molineux, he suicided,
> Right into Eternity he up and glided!"

Mildred sang.

"Ladies, I must insist that the auction be permitted to proceed — Teddy Bear, will you kindly administer quiet to the fractious ones," Katharine requested, unflustered by these attacks.

Teddy at once placed a pillow over Mildred's mouth.

"Freshmen in your faded green, you are leaving the paternal shelter of Rosy's eyes — no more — oh, my fond heart, can I go on? No more shall we see those purple ties, those sky-blue hose peeping out from beneath those creased trousers! What, what am I offered? To you, dear freshmen, we would leave them, tender mementos.

Dressed over, a little thought sprinkled in among the flowers, equally balanced, would appease the dear Doctor." Groans greeted the name.

"Add the smile; you ought to throw that in, Puck!"

"Yes, Polly, I shall leave it. Be careful to administer the smile in even doses, always leveling above; be sure you heed the word — above the bald spot! I shall not be able to wear the smile after I have parted with these trophies," sighing deeply.

"Poor Bob!" a giggle from several quarters greeted this exclamation. Mildred had escaped from the pillow.

"What, no bids? Ah, that's a brave little one! Ten cents! My dear, listen!" opening the pack and beginning to read:

> "'Round about the sacred elm,
> Danced the babies of the realm,'"

"doggerel is written in the margin by that heartless, fastidious man; but you, you feel it's poetry — that's only two lines! Listen, here's another choice bit: 'Yonder silently sentineling the passing years, yea marking off the centuries, stands that noble statuesque figure, his head bare to the winds of passing years!'" Applause greeted this. How many remembered Kath-

arine's daring wager that "Rosy" would never know that familiar statue had on its head a Puritan hat all the time — well knowing that the flowers would win the conference man over to good marks. "Just frills, girls, did it. You can't get through these devious and perilous paths of conference men without compromising your esthetic conscience a bit.

"Is this worth only a dime? Oh, nobly done! Going, going at a dozen pennies — one more, and, because my heart is in the packet there, I will not raise it; it is yours. Captain Brown, when cares are pressing, take them and meditate on them; they will give you heart."

Shouts of "Oh, heartless one!" greeted the next object held up. It was a pair of red bedroom slippers, out at the toes, and pinned to them the Baby Stuart cap worn by Margaret in her famous senior-freshman party, from which she had derived her nickname.

Mildred groaned. Well she remembered the sticky, gluey bandage placed on her eyes that long-ago night when she, with her classmates, visited with the sophomores those Dantesque regions at the Hallowe'en party.

"I can feel that jiggling ladder yet, can't you, Topsy?" Margaret asked.

"Can't we hear the slam-bang of that gelatin pan on the fire escape, and see Baby Stuart fleeing along it, leaving her red slipper behind?" Teddy added. Many of the girls had heard this story of freshman valor.

"I can never let them depart from our precious trophies. I shall never forget the thrill of that night, and when I see these, they will remind me," Ethel cried.

"Well, Cinderella, slippers are just right for you; but you must find the Prince your senior year; I'm getting worried!"

"You don't need to; I'm the one to worry over," Mildred piped up; "nearly cut out already."

"They are yours; hide thy blushes; Topsy is busy being consoled in other quarters." Margaret's escort of freshman days had been seen in a canoe on the Charles with Mildred only a few days before.

Katharine made another sortie into the pile and brought out a battered package of Economics-10 themes. "'Is Marriage a Failure?'" she stumbled on, nor did her tones falter as she finished it in the Bedlam of fun all about her. "'Is insanity increasing?' 'Should Women be Given the Ballot?' 'Why College Women do not

Marry?'" she read on between each lull in the fun. "Topsy, the most progressive and modern of all my adopted ones, I give and bequeath this priceless legacy to you; it will inform your wily footsteps, and, perhaps, warn you before it is forever too late."

"Guided by your noble example, Puck, I need no such aid. I may learn something about running settlement clubs and winning hearts; I expect to start one on improved methods."

"Always consult Winters' and Molineux' famous 'Guide to Beginners in Social Work,' and you'll have no trouble. Most inspiring!" Araminta advised.

Mildred had been working in unobserved moments to edge out of the pile a placard she had spied there. Katharine intercepted the act. "Here, I'm auctioneer — that's coming later!" Some of the girls had seen enough of the gilt edge to guess to what it belonged, so a considerable anticipative merriment was evident in that portion of the room where Mildred was active.

Katharine next picked out two faded Dartmouth and Brown pennants. "Those days! It almost brings the tears, girls. Do you remember where they hung? Dear old Pie Alley!"

"Pie Alley! Oh, Puck, my heart will never

cease to sigh for those freshman-sophomore days when wit, eloquence, wisdom, and tea flowed together."

"Yes, and fudge. Could you make some, Flossy, my dear? My mouth waters for it this very night," Araminta begged; in which all joined.

"You shall once more have our pans. Do you remember those slavery days, Flossy?"

"Do I remember? Did I not then vow never again to mix another spoonful, and now I'm goose enough to be teased into it! Get the pans at once and let me be a-mixing it. Where's the sugar, Puck?" No one had dared suggest this would be the last time she would ever have a chance to do it for the girls of Ware — that subject was industriously avoided by the girls tonight.

"I'll get it," Ethel cried, as Katharine resumed her sale.

"To thee, Topsy, I make one more bequest — these pennants for the sake of bygone days," holding the Dartmouth above the other.

Mildred bowed profoundly and accepted the gift, placing the green across her heart, and gazing reproachfully at Ethel. That young lady was too busy helping Flossy to notice the act.

Polly had begun rattling the dishes preparatory

to making tea. "Here, girls, water! I must hunt up some lemons."

While Katharine was glancing through the rest of the pile still remaining to be given away, Mildred had succeeded in extricating the desired placard from the pack. Savory odors were coming from the bedroom, steam was pouring from the brass teapot on its urn. Suddenly a scream of delight brought Katharine to an upright position. About her neck Mildred had slipped the large placard Teddy Bear had made for her in her freshman days, bearing the word "Engaged," in old English gilt letters. Almost instantly from all sides bundles of every conceivable shape began to shower down upon Katharine's lap. For once she was nonplussed, bewildered. For one moment she gazed about her at the funny looking packages, then she began deliberately to untie them.

"You engaged me, ladies, for your auctioneer; I am at your service." From the first package a rattle fell out. When she could make herself heard, she cried, "Polly, my dear, always keep the baby engaged with this when making tea, unless the 'Remnant' is by. You see, girls, the infant's fate." The water was already boiling over.

"This," opening a bib, "I give thee, Baby

Stuart, as a memento from your godmother. And this to you, Topsy, to keep forever alive thy freshman days," handing her a jumping jack. "This will I keep," it was a woolly lamb. "Ah, what fond memories, Kiddie dear,— dost remember that night we hung out this sign?" touching the placard about her neck, "and made this infant? And this," opening to a pen-sketch of a very large moon shining upon a pot of honey, "To the mooniest and sweetest of us all, dear Princess;" and so on through a number of mimic housekeeping utensils, till she picked up incautiously a tiny umbrella, and began to raise it above her head. Polly had stopped pouring to watch, and Flossy stood in the door — all knew what was coming. It suddenly flew open, showering over Katharine's wavy red hair the cleverly concealed rice.

It was well that it was Saturday night. The noise brought Miss Blodgett to the door. There sat Katharine, the placard, with its suggestive legend, about her neck, the woolly lamb in her arms, and the rice peppering her hair.

"Won't you come in, Miss Blodgett, and have some tea? the girls are practicing on me," Katharine laughed, jumping to her feet, and bowing in a courtly manner to the matron. The invitation

was declined, and the fun went on with the tea.

"Now, Puck, it's up to you to own up!" Flossy demanded, seconded by a dozen others.

"Well, I'll admit I've had several very delicate hints that something of the sort is wanted; but, girls, I'll put you wise when the shower'll be useful. Polly, one lemon and two sugars, please — same old way," taking refuge, as in "Pie Alley" days, on the window seat beside Teddy Bear. Katharine's face was much flushed, but the girls thought that they had never seen her look more fascinating.

"I hope I've disposed of the packages to suit your taste, girls; they were not marked — Flossy, it's the best yet," helping herself to a generous piece of fudge.

When all but the octet had gone, Katharine, throwing her arms about them, suddenly exclaimed, "Girls, girls, I can't, I just can't say the 'dust to dust' act over these last days!" and broke into tears. They all wept. "These years of life together are unlike any other life we'll ever know," she said when they were quieter, "I'm happy — about — about the other, but this is the end of it for us here."

They were the breaking ties; life was beginning

for these merry girls. It was late when they parted that night. Nothing of importance was said by any save Mella. What she told them crowded out for the time even the morrow's parting.

"Girls," very gently, "I've to tell you — my parents — they are, they are living — coming to get me."

"Mella!" they could not say more; it was not the time. Mella's heart was too full just then; intuitively they had learned to know when to be expressive with this friend. They knew she must tell it in her own way.

"The old nurse is here — I saw her yesterday. The locket I found this summer, she lost; then my guardian's doctor was called to see her, very sick. He told her of what I had found; I was stolen from her in the Bois, near Paris — my father and mother traced me to the West End of Boston. There they found the jewel half of my locket pawned. Then he left her to go to my mother, and Nurse has been sick long — that's how they lost her."

"And the lake — down there, Mella," Katharine asked eagerly.

"Yes, yes, they're all true, my feelings — I lived on Lake Geneva till I was four, then I was

stolen; that — that man down there kept me till I was five. Then my guardian adopted me. Oh, girls, to know my mother!"— Mella was lost to them in the rapturous joy of her great discovery. The girls were silent. The blessing of mother and father had never seemed so priceless as now. They were to lose Mella, but even this was swallowed up by their great joy for her gain.

CHAPTER XX

TO SAY GOOD-BY

"Now, Bob, don't be foolish! I've never cared for Carl Fry, and I never shall. I told you, Bobby, and I meant it: I'm not going to have any man around to order me about but you. I'm used to your foolishness, so I'm not troubled by it. Now I've really got you settled, I'm too happy for anything else just yet."

"Pegsie, my little pard, I'm plaguy relieved; he's got to be higher up the ladder before I'll quit my claim. You'll always be my little pard — it can't stop for any one; Katharine doesn't want it to; she's too big for that."

"She's a great deal bigger and a great deal nobler than you half know, Bobbie. You're just as big, but I think men have to grow to understand our way of being big. Carl didn't; that's why I couldn't love him. I'm sorry, Bob, but I never led him on; he just wouldn't see that I didn't care for him."

Margaret and Bob were lingering in her dismantled room. He had come up to pack the

books for the three girls. He was holding both his sister's hands in his, and looking down into her eyes, and thinking of the changes that had come since he first sent her here. This long-dreamed-of year together at college was over. How much of experience for both of them had been packed into it! The next year, her senior year, must be alone with Ethel. All the others whom they had known so well would be gone. Even Bob was not coming back, for his father needed him.

"Oh, Bobbie!" Margaret pressed her head against the big chest, and the arms, which had so often shielded her, were around her. "I seem to feel just as if the bottom were all gone, and that I should never know myself when I do stop falling. No Bob, no Katharine, to begin the last year; even Katharine's not coming back for her P. G.!"

"No, but Pegsie, there's Ethel; she's a girl to tie to. I honestly think that I never saw a truer. I've sometimes wondered if Ned Baxter is really caring for her, or playing it off on Mildred."

"It's not that, Bob; Ethel doesn't care for him, I know. But he really is dear — I've always liked him."

"Not going to be a rivalry?"

"Oh, Bob Winters, I do hope you'll become less embarrassingly stupid before you marry Katharine; it's very trying to have to associate closely with you under the circumstances!"

"Well, Miss Peggarty, I'm sure this intimacy was forced upon me," holding her off at arm's length.

"There! I'm not equal to any arguments, but do try to be bright," trying very hard to look severe.

"Then I'm to understand that there's no danger? I'm relieved. But if it's necessary, I'll thrash Ned — he shan't play with Ethel. I admire his choice — Mildred's interesting, but too varied for a steady tie down."

"She's really fond of him; sometimes I think she cares. She threw him over because she saw that she could never make him happy. There's a great deal to Mildred. Mella has helped her as she has us all. Now you must go, Bob; I want Katharine all to myself, to-night; you can have her to-morrow — that's fair, isn't it, you dear old naughty Bob?"

"I'm obedient," kissing her in his old hearty way.

An hour later Katharine and Margaret were deep in their trunks. It was impossible for

either to say more than passing nothings as they worked. This was the curtain on the last act of their three years of intimate life together. They had seen each other at the worst and best, for in such close relations the linings have to show. From each struggle they had come out nearer together; new friends had come into their lives, but each new one had only crowded them closer together as they made room for the new. Now a new bond held them, making the old even more tender because of the loving, manly heart to which each had given so much.

"I like that big house you girls are going to take next year. Bob and I went over it this morning. It's going to make it easier for Ethel to have her mother come and care for the girls who are going to be together — you and Ethel on that top floor — I can just see you dreaming dreams there in that big studio. I'm glad you're not to stay here."

Margaret was very busy packing, in the bottom of her trunk. Tears were not so often seen in her eyes as in freshman days, but some were strangling her now, as Katharine said these last words. She went on packing with might and main. Cloud Katharine's happiness she was determined she would not. Looking up suddenly

from her work, she saw Katharine smiling down upon her, trying so hard to make the smile genuine. That was too much. Together they looked about the dismantled room; there was a half-hearted, pathetic attempt to be jovial; then they sank beside the trunk in a surrendered heap, close in each other's arms. The tears came as tears only can come when hearts are young, and feel the first bitterness of parting.

It was Katharine who first got control of herself: "It's — it's lots better than it might be. We can never live this way again," there were some quavers in Katharine's voice, and Margaret was gazing desperately at the opposite wall, "but we've both got Bob. It will always be together, Kiddie. I loved him through you first. I always wanted to know a man who was to his sister what he is to you. You've been so big about sharing him. Love like ours, Kiddie, can't die; it's the rock kind. I'm so glad Bob's willing to have me try for myself two years' teaching. I want to test myself every way first — that's such a big step in friendship — marriage! We both need to grow to the idea,— and kiddie, just think, I'm really going to be as near as New York state. Think of it, visits both ways! All our vacations together!" Katharine was radiant by this time.

"Katharine, are you really going to be as near as that — in that academy? Oh, maybe I can stand it then!" It was so like the same old tragic despair that Katharine could not resist laughing, in which Margaret was soon joining, through her tears.

"Oh, Kiddie dear, what a real Baby Stuart you are yet!"

FINIS

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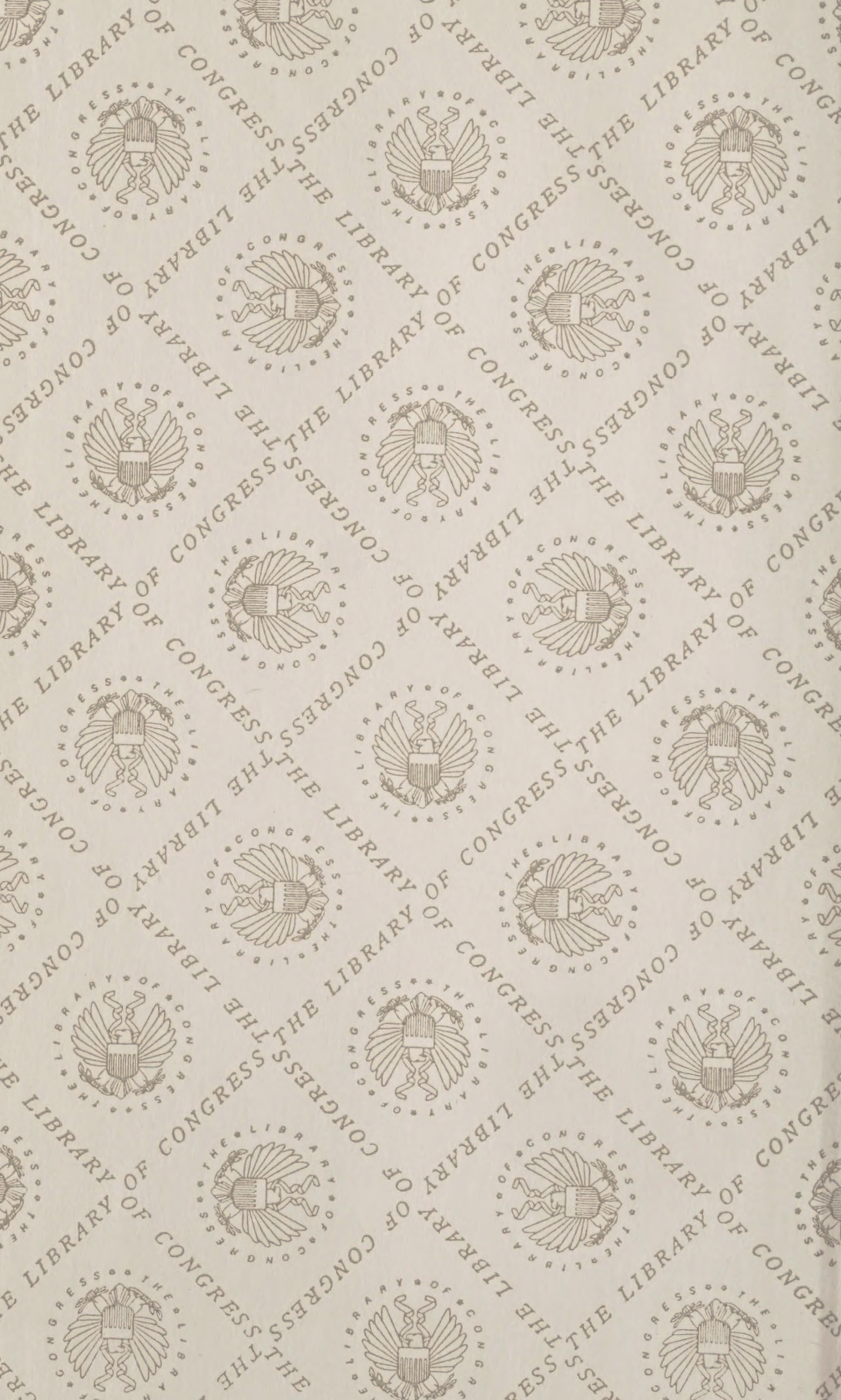
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